DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 831 EC 110 440

AUTHOR Kroth, Roger L.; Scholl, Geraldine T.
TITLE Getting Schools Involved with Parents.
INSTITUTION Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Va. Information Center on Exceptional Children.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 75p.
AVAILABLE FROM The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091 ($5.00)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Delivery Systems; Educational Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Exceptional Child Education; *Exceptional Persons; Federal Legislation; *Handicapped Children; Parent Education; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship

ABSTRACT

To provide practical assistance in involving parents of exceptional students in their child's education, examples of successful school programs of parental involvement are presented, along with vignettes illustrating various aspects of parental involvement. In the section on the merits of parent participation are discussed political activities, Public Laws 93-380 and 94-142, decisionmaking, school-community relations, problem solution, and a comprehensive service delivery system. Parental needs, attitudes, and values are presented along with a discussion of the hard-to-reach parent. In the section on outcomes and objectives are discussed program planning and committment to parental involvement. Components of parent education programs covered include program design and management, lesson plan development, principal power, parent advisory groups, and parent volunteer programs. Appended are a Parent Involvement Assessment Scale, a list of organizations and agencies concerned with exceptional persons, and lists of references and selected readings. (DLS)

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GETTING SCHOOLS INVOLVED WITH PARENTS

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ED155831

EC110440

The Council for Exceptional Children

ERIC A product of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children.

Published in 1978 by The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091

Library of Congress Number 78–54147

The material in this publication was prepared pursuant to a contract with the National Institute of Education, US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication the manuscript was submitted to The Council for Exceptional Children for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either The Council for Exceptional Children or the National Institute of Education.

Printed in the United States of America.

Design and artwork by Angeline V. Culfogienis
Photographs by Nanda Ward Haynes

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Preface

The establishment of a program of parent involvement in any delivery system of education is important. Experience has shown that children are more likely to achieve at a higher level when their parents are involved in the educational process, and parents are more likely to become involved when they are served by professionals who have been trained to work with family members. In educating exceptional children, parent input is even more essential. Handicapped and gifted students need support, understanding, and direction from the most influential people in their world.

Recent state and federal court actions have established that basic prerogatives of parents include the right to be informed about educational provisions, the right to review and appeal placement and program decisions, and the right to have the benefits of a special program specified and evaluated. Shared responsibility of parents and professionals offers the opportunity to establish a positive relationship between school and home. This interaction multiplies the beneficial impact upon the child's education.

Convinced of the need to disseminate information about how to initiate or expand parent education programs, the authors and CEC staff expended considerable effort in searching out school programs around the country that attempt to have parental involvement. The findings were scattered and varied.

Examples of successful operations have been compiled for this publication to show ongoing activities. The authors, drawing upon their many years of experience in working with parents and training teachers to work with parents, have added their own vignettes and recommendations that are specific, realistic, and replicable.

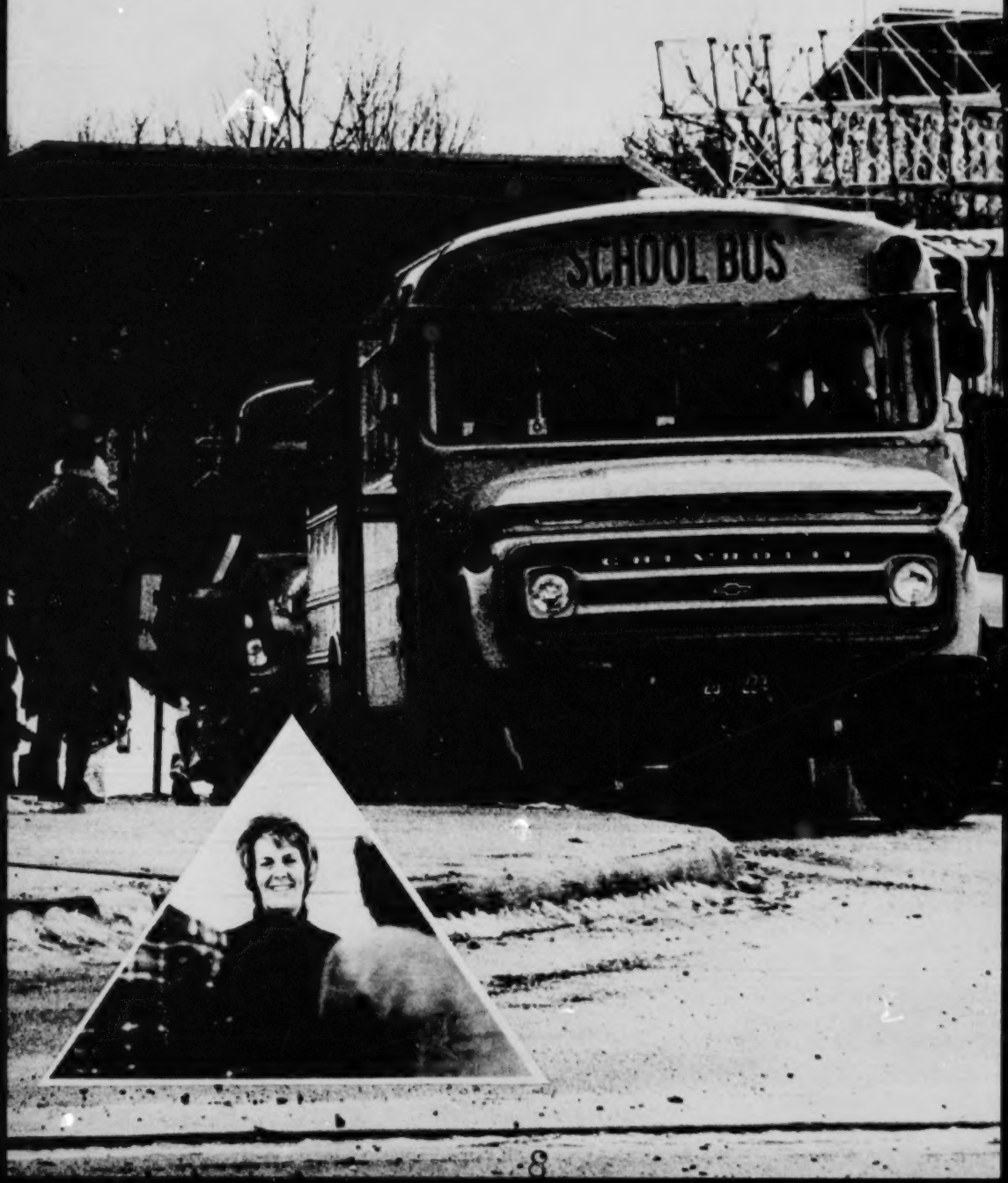
The book can be used in a variety of ways and is structured so that one section does not depend upon another. This versatility was intended to serve different needs of different readers. Parents and persons in parental roles may profit from the beginning discussions of national legislation supporting parent involvement, values, attitudes, variables contributing to the state of the art, objectives, and outcomes of comprehensive service delivery systems. The

teacher, teacher trainer, or staff developer may go directly to the sections that give ideas for designing parent advisory groups, home visitation programs, progress reporting, volunteer programs, parent conferences, and parent education workshops. Administrators will find particularly valuable the parent involvement assessment scale in Appendix A, which can be used to measure or improve the effectiveness of their schools' parent programs.

Getting Schools Involved with Parents offers practical assistance to the many adults involved in instructional and noninstructional roles in serving the needs of exceptional students at elementary and secondary school levels.

M. Angele Thomas
The Council for Exceptional Children

1 Introduction



Parent involvement is an integral component of early childhood education programs. Nursery schools recognize the family as an influential factor in the growth and development of the child; teachers and parents are viewed as partners in helping the child reach maximum potential. Cooperative nursery schools have a long history of using the skills of parents in all aspects of programing and illustrate the team relationship between home and school in the educational process.

Early intervention programs for disadvantaged children have also recognized the need for such cooperation. Project Head Start includes objectives and performance standards for parent involvement in its policy manual (OCD, 1975). In Head Start programs parents are considered instructional allies in providing learning activities, are involved in making decisions related to program planning and operation, participate in program activities in a variety of roles, and are expected to carry over into the home what is learned in school.

For handicapped children, parent involvement is likewise an essential element in early intervention programs. Illustrative of such involvement are the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) First Chance projects that have identified the various roles that parents play within the network of these programs (Shearer & Shearer, 1977). These roles include administrator, disseminator, staff member (volunteer and paid), primary teacher, recruiter, curriculum developer, counselor, assessor of skills, evaluator, and record keeper. Some early childhood education programs for handicapped children require active participation of the family members in the educational program; others take the school program into the home in order to involve the family in the educational process.

Despite the success of parent involvement in programs for preschool age children, both normal and handicapped, parents and families are usually ignored in school programs above the kindergarten level. Some reasons for this lack of involvement include the following:

1. Many parents feel alienated from the regular school program. Teachers and other school personnel frequently use unfamiliar language in describing activities in the classroom; parents then view what goes on in the classroom as mysterious and something they cannot understand
2. Many educators fear involvement of parents in the school program. Often school staff members do not know how to work with parents even though they may recognize the value of parent participation (Cohen, 1977).
3. Some parents have attempted to get involved but become disillusioned when their involvement makes no apparent difference or their efforts are largely ignored by educators.
4. Schools, especially at the secondary level, are often viewed as large, bureaucratic organizations, and parents fear reprisals from the top if they do become involved in school policy making and recommend decisions that are contrary to the wishes of the school administration.

5. Lines of communication between the school and parents are frequently not clear, and parents are confused about where to go for help or assistance. The larger the school, the less likely a parent is able to identify resources (Kroth, 1977).
6. School hours are the same as the usual work hours of parents and prevent active participation and involvement of parents during the day; teachers are not available when parents are.

In spite of these problems, schools can and should become involved with families in educational programs for school age handicapped pupils. The purpose of this book is to discuss ways in which parent involvement can be implemented in programs for school age handicapped children and youth and to provide guidelines for the development of meaningful parent involvement with school personnel.

Definitions

As children progress in school, the person who assumes the role of parent frequently changes from the natural parents to someone else. The increasing number of one parent families, the high rate of divorce, the number of handicapped children who are cared for in settings other than the home as defined in a traditional sense, and the trend toward developing group home placement for handicapped adolescents and adults contribute to the need for defining the terms *parent* and *family* more broadly. For the purposes of this book, the definition of *parent* from Public Law 94–142 (1975) will be employed. According to this definition, "Parent means a parent, a guardian, a person acting as a parent of a child, or a surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance with 121 a. 514" (p. 42479).

At the age of majority, most of the principles, guidelines, and functions discussed in this book and ascribed to parents should be considered appropriate for handicapped persons themselves.

The *family* will be considered as the group with whom the handicapped child is living, including siblings as well as any others who may live in the home of the primary caretaker.

School personnel should be aware of the great variation in who performs the parenting or primary care taking role for the handicapped child as well as those living with the family who are having an influence and an impact on the life experiences of the child.

While the major focus of this book is directed toward the education of handicapped children, it should be remembered that parent involvement in the education of gifted and creative children, and indeed the education of all children, can be enhanced by greater participation of the parents in the educative process.

The following chapter presents a rationale for parent involvement that will furnish the base on which guidelines for developing a planned program may be built.

2 The Merits of Parent Participation

Parents and their children are the primary consumers of the education enterprise. As with other consumer groups within American society, parents are demanding a greater voice in decisions that will affect the education of their children. The parent movement is credited with much of the progress made during the past three decades in securing better services for handicapped children (Gorham, Des Jardins, Page, Pettis, & Scheiber, 1975). Progress has come about chiefly through the political activities of parents at the federal, state, and local levels and through the demonstrated merits of parent involvement.

Political Activities

Through legislation and court action, parents and their advocates have secured rights related to parent involvement in two major areas: free public education and participation in placement decisions regarding their children (Rhodes & Sweeney, 1977).

1. Access to free public education has in the past been denied to many handicapped children. Parents have often been faced with the alternatives of keeping the child at home, sending the child to an institution where educational programs were meager or nonexistent, or paying for private schooling. The law states and the courts have concurred that public schools are responsible and must assume the costs for educating handicapped children.
2. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act secure the rights of parents to all information, including test scores that schools maintain in their records. Parents must be informed of any intended or proposed evaluations, be given access to the results, and participate in decisions relative to placement in a special education program. Where the decision is exclusion from school, parents have the right to a due process hearing.

Two recent federal laws address in particular parent involvement in programs for disadvantaged and handicapped children: Public Law 93–380 (1974) and Public Law 94–142 (1975).

Public Law 93–380

Public Law 93–380, Education Amendments of 1974, requires that advisory councils be initiated for the school district and for individual schools in the district being served by federally assisted programs or projects. Membership on these advisory councils must include, as a majority, parents of children being served in the program or project. While the right of parents to participate in decision making relative to educational programs that are receiving federal funds is guaranteed by this legislation, many parents are unaware of this right and schools frequently do not help educate them to exercise their rights. To avoid future problems, school systems should take the initiative to

inform the parents concerned of their rights under this legislation and plan informational programs to help them know and exercise these rights.

Vignette 1 Initiation of an Advisory Council

Realizing that parents in his community would be unaccustomed to working with school personnel in making decisions under Public Law 93–380, John Rhodes, superintendent of a medium size school district, initiated an information program on the role and responsibilities of advisory councils. The school staff prepared a series of presentations on appropriate and meaningful activities; provided role playing experiences for the parents, which were videotaped and later critiqued in groups; and engaged in informal discussions with parents regarding areas in which they would like to play a decision making role. Both school staff and parents benefited from this experience, and today the parent advisory councils play an active, meaningful role in that school district.

Public Law 94–142

Public Law 94–142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, is even more specific regarding the involvement of parents. The input and participation of parents in the educational process is mandated at two levels: for handicapped children in general and for every individual handicapped child in particular.

Parents must be included as members of advisory committees in making decisions about educational programs for handicapped children. Parents selected to serve in these advisory capacities may need the assistance of educators in carrying out their role effectively. All parents cannot serve on these advisory committees and no one parent can speak to the divergent needs of all categorical groups. Parents selected for these positions must set aside personal biases and think in terms of what is needed and what is best for all handicapped children. This may be a new experience for many parents, and educators may need to assist them in accepting a broader view of the special educational needs of various types of handicapping conditions so they can carry out their advisory role more effectively.

The second level of input is in the individualized education program, which must be developed for all handicapped children being served. The individualized education program represents the joint effort of educators and parents. The regulations stipulate that the parents or guardians of the handicapped child and, when appropriate, the child participate in the meeting when the individualized education program statement is developed. This formulation of an individualized education program based on the child's needs will be a new experience for both parents and educators. The success of these meetings will be dependent upon the extent to which educators and

parents are prepared to work together toward a common goal to plan and to provide the best possible educational experience for the child. Parents in particular may need guidance in what should be the outcome of an individualized education program meeting in order to participate effectively.

In addition to the mandated parent participation on advisory committees and in meetings to develop individualized education programs, parents are guaranteed due process rights under Public Law 94–142. The extent to which these due process procedures are used by parents will be dependent upon the extent to which school personnel find productive and meaningful ways to involve parents. In those districts where educators take the initiative to work with parents, there will undoubtedly be cooperative and joint efforts in working toward the common goal of providing a good special education program for all handicapped children and thus less need for parents to employ due process procedures in order to secure an appropriate education for their children.

Vignette 2 Advance Information of an IEP Meeting

Janet Perry, an itinerant teacher working with preschool children, realized that many parents were entering their first individualized education program meetings "cold." She decided that they needed more information in order to participate fully and meaningfully in the process. She prepared a booklet that outlined in simple terms the purposes of the individualized education program, described the roles of those attending the session, outlined the expected outcomes, and explained the due process procedures. She mailed the booklet to parents several weeks prior to the scheduled individualized education program date; in a cover letter, she explained that she would be telephoning within a week to arrange for a home visit to answer any questions.

This advance preparation assisted parents in knowing what to expect and made them more comfortable about the meeting with professionals. Mrs. Perry also found that the parents participated much more actively in the process and later carried out their part of the plan more effectively.

Schools, through state and federal mandatory special education legislation, are now required to offer equal educational opportunities to handicapped children. School personnel can best meet their obligations to these children by working with parents in positive, constructive ways and involving them in decisions and policies that affect their children's education. Parents achieving this long sought goal are eager to participate in this process. By working together, better educational programs and services can be provided for handicapped children.

Vignette 3 Consumer Group Advocacy

Prior to the passage of mandatory special education legislation in one state, many professionals from both regular and special education opposed the bill on the grounds that the state constitution already guaranteed the right to education for handicapped children. Parents whose handicapped children were being provided with inadequate or no services challenged this view. Parent and consumer groups representing all categories of handicapping conditions joined forces with organized labor, business groups, and the Parent-Teacher Association to exert pressure on the legislature to pass the bill. Their joint efforts achieved their goal.

In spite of initial opposition, educators by and large have since worked to implement the intent of the legislation in spite of reduced financial resources in both the state and local districts.

Merits of Parent Involvement

Parents can be involved meaningfully in a number of ways: through joint decision making, in improved school-community relations, as allies in problem solving and, most importantly, as part of a comprehensive service delivery system.

Decision Making

In the past, decisions concerning school policies and procedures were made at the administrative level and implemented at the individual school level with little resistance from teachers and almost none from parents and pupils. This is no longer the situation. Decisions made at the top are implemented at the school building level only with the support of teachers and the consumers (i.e., parents and pupils), and these groups are demanding involvement in making decisions that affect them. The challenge for the school administrator is to foster the constructive participation of parents in school decisions and policies (Bridge, 1976).

Parents of handicapped children are no less concerned about the education of their children. Formerly, these parents have not had access to a free public education for their children; with legislative and judicial backing, they are making their voices heard and are demanding a voice in decisions that affect their children. Administrators working in concert with parents, both individually and in groups, will reap the benefits of this cooperative venture in more effective implementation of decisions.

School-Community Relations

The American population is shifting from the large family orientation having close contact with the schools to one of childless couples and families with children beyond school age who thus have minimal direct contact with

schools. Less direct contact results in less information about school needs and hence less likelihood of financial support to meet those needs.

Support for special education becomes even more tenuous because the large proportion of the general population has minimal contact with handicapped children and/or adults. In order to obtain support for special education, both financial and programmatic, it is essential for school personnel to involve parents of handicapped children in a planned public information program about handicapping conditions and the need for educational programs. Parents actively participating in schools are frequently the most effective salespeople for new programs to the community.

Vignette 4 Public Awareness of Millage Election

An intermediate school district board set the date for a special education millage election without the active involvement of the parent advisory committee and other interested parent organizations. Lacking adequate information about how the funds thus generated would be used or even whether they were actually needed, these groups were neither actively supportive nor in opposition. The millage failed. Realizing that the support of the community, particularly the parents of the handicapped children, was essential, the board launched a public awareness and information program involving the parents in the total process. With this support, the millage passed by an overwhelming majority at the next election.

Problem Solution

Schools today are faced with innumerable problems: court ordered integration, substance abuse (e.g., drug or alcohol abuse), a rising crime rate, low achievement of pupils, declining scores on national assessment measures, teenage pregnancy, child abuse, and vandalism, to name a few. Frequently, society places the blame for these problems on the schools; almost always society expects the schools to solve the problems, most of which require the cooperation of other social institutions and community groups. Many school districts are recognizing that parents can be a help in solving these problems and are encouraging their participation on committees that propose and work toward possible solutions.

The successful mainstreaming of handicapped children offers a challenge that will require the cooperation of all for successful implementation. Special educators must involve parents of handicapped children in this process to assist in educating parents of normal children regarding the advantages and benefits of mainstreaming to all children.

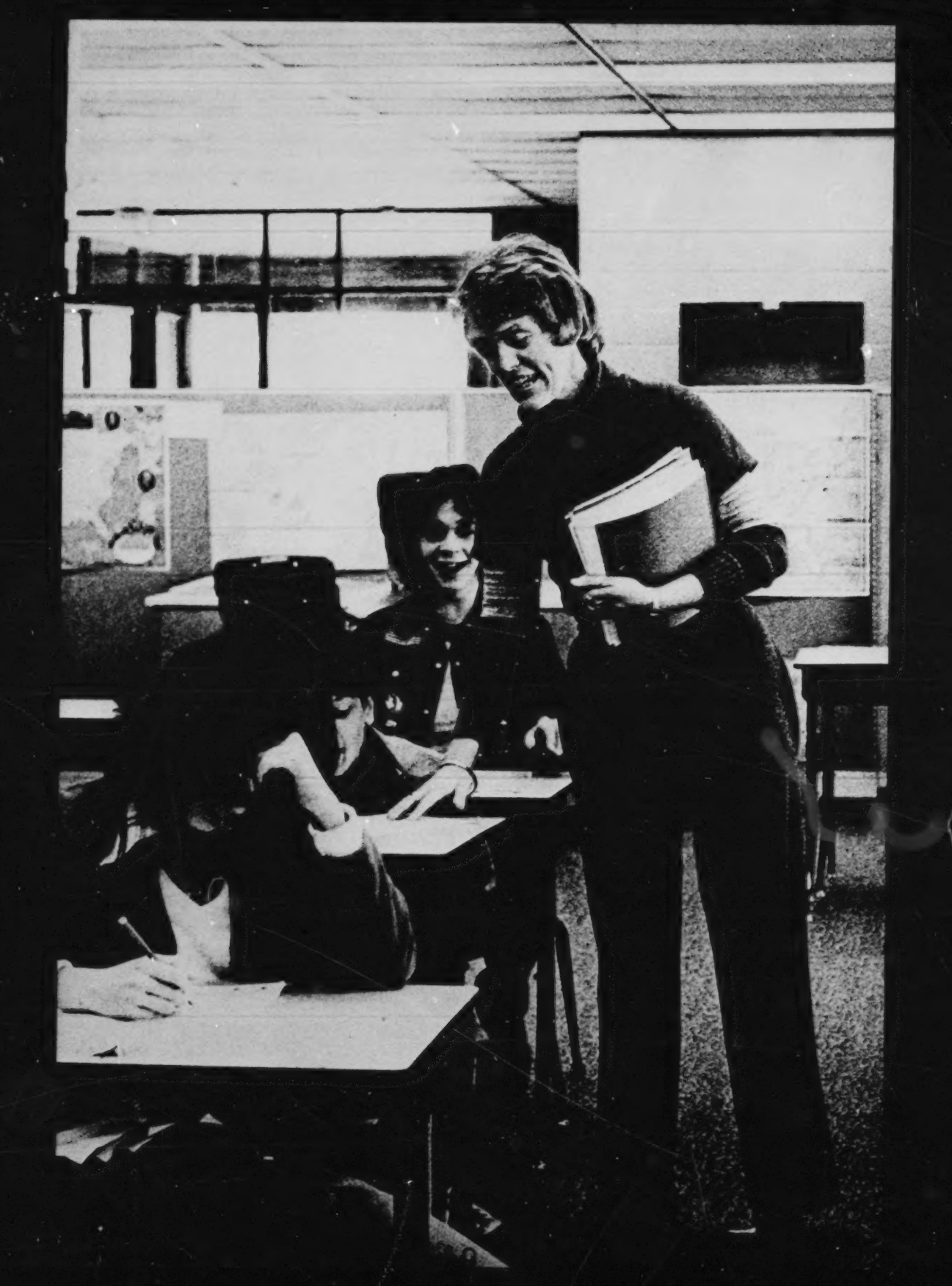
Comprehensive Service Delivery System

The participation and involvement of parents in the educational process is increasingly recognized as part of the team effort and, therefore, an essential

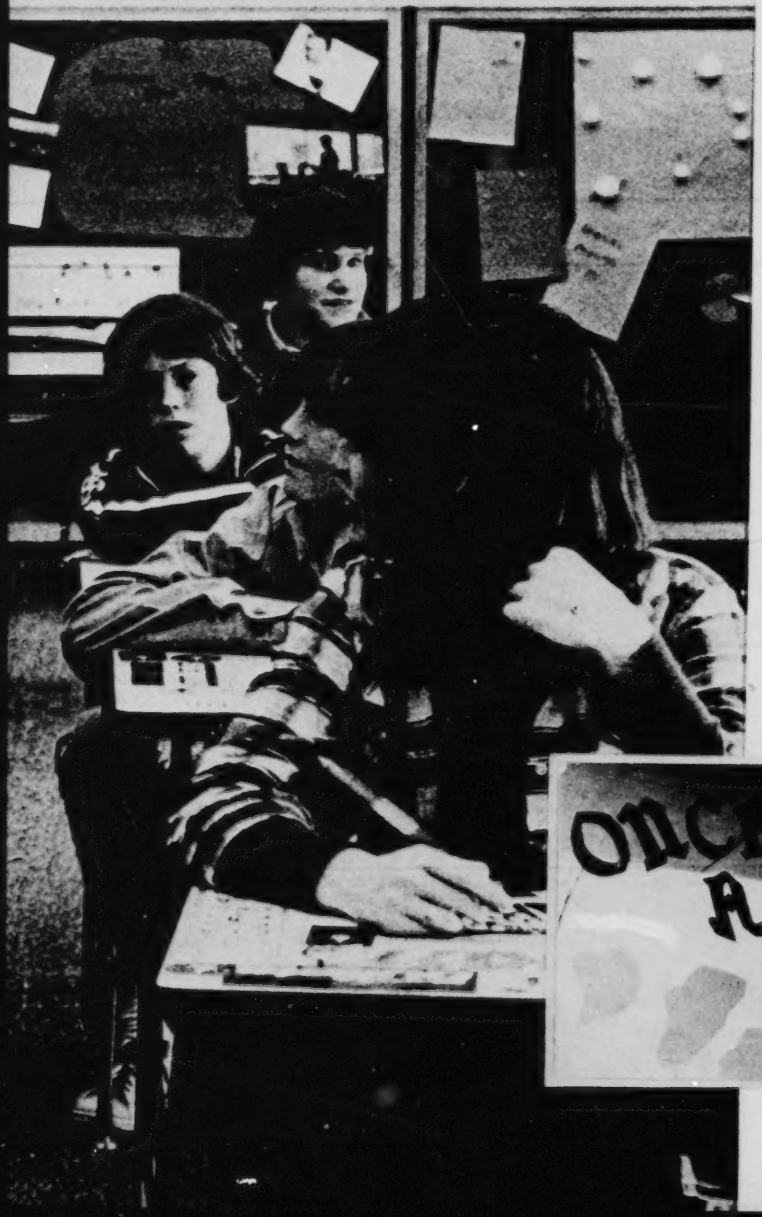
element in the comprehensive service delivery system. It is known that parents play a critical role in how well the child performs in school (Bridge, 1976). The role of parents in the habilitation of the handicapped child has also long been recognized (Wright, 1960). When parents are truly cotherapists with the educational system, the educational/treatment day is extended. Not all habilitation can take place within the confines of a school day and, therefore, carry over or transfer of what is learned in the school must be made into the home and community setting. This will come about more quickly and effectively when parents are active participants in educational planning. Future problems can frequently be anticipated and often prevented through parent and teacher joint involvement in planning. Cooperatively, teachers and parents select instructional activities that can be implemented both in the home and in school. Cooperative planning increases communication between home and school and becomes an important element in the educational process. The education of handicapped children requires home-school cooperation if those children are to make maximum use of their abilities.

Summary

Legislative and judicial actions are insuring the basic rights of parents to an appropriate educational program for their handicapped children and to participation in decisions affecting the education of their children, particularly regarding placement and curriculum. Parent participation encouraged through planned programs will involve parents in the educational enterprise. It may also help prevent due process hearings that arise when parents are not in accord with decisions made about their child because the school has not kept them informed and knowledgeable about all aspects of their child's educational needs.



3 Needs, Attitudes, and Values



School personnel initiating a program of parent involvement should anticipate having a wide range of individual differences among parents. No one program can be appropriate for parents of all types of handicapped children nor for every parent of a particular category of handicapping condition. Parents are as different as are their children and their differences should be recognized in planning programs of parent involvement. Similarly, there are differences among school personnel that must also be considered. Following is a summary of some of the variations in needs, attitudes, and values that both parents and professionals may bring to the school.

Needs

Parents bring to school basic needs that must be satisfied before they can be concerned with school involvement. Coletta (p. 32, 1977) elaborated on Maslow's needs hierarchy as follows:

- *Level I–Physical.* Needs for sustaining life: nourishment, protection from the elements, and sexual activity.
- *Level II–Psychological.* Feeling secure in our person. Knowing our future is predictable. Suspicious of change; needing to reduce conflict and uncertainty; putting stress on norms and rules.
- *Level III–Emotional.* Love and belonging. The need to feel part of an enduring group where one is accepted, wanted, loved, and respected. Only when these conditions are reasonably satisfied can we love, respect others, and be helpful. Needs not met at this level lead to self defeating, attention getting behaviors (suspicion, aggression).
- Level IV–Self esteem. To be regarded as valuable and competent by others. Growth in awareness of self worth leads to less dependence upon others' judgment of one's worth. Key is to find ways to help parents see selves as worthwhile.
- *Level V–Fulfillment.* Self actualization occurs when four lower level needs are satisfied. A striving for self development and risk tasking.

School personnel must be aware that lower needs must be satisfied before one progresses to the next higher level (Coletta, 1977). However, parents of handicapped children often encounter difficulty in having lower level needs satisfied. As a single parent, a mother may be far more concerned about obtaining a job that will pay a sufficient amount to support her child today (Level I) than she is about helping the child become an independent adult tomorrow. Survival needs, such as providing food, clothing and shelter, may take precedence at times over long term goals for the child. Feeling secure as a parent and coping with the uncertain future of a handicapped child (Level II) may lead to parental behaviors that may be interpreted as uncooperative. Being a "good parent" to a handicapped child may mean forcing that child to be independent and do things on his own. Rather than risk criticism, some parents may overprotect the child. To be respected as competent parents (Level IV), children should become successful adults. Such success may be

elusive for some handicapped children who will never achieve normality in many areas because of their disability; parents may have problems learning to live with a different definition of success or to alter their aspirations for their child. Gaining respect as a competent parent may be a challenge.

Vignette 5 Sensitivity Training Toward a Handicap
Seven year old Steve, who is blind, was encouraged by his mother to ride his tricycle up and down the sidewalk in front of their home. The neighbors complained to the school principal that Steve's mother was mean to him and that he might fall and hurt himself. The principal discussed possible solutions with the itinerant teacher, the school PTA officers, and with Steve's mother. They decided to schedule a program for the next PTA meeting on how blind children need encouragement to be independent and that handicapped children are not usually harmed by the bumps and bruises encountered by all children in the process of growing up. The information presented helped the neighbors to realize that blindness should not prevent Steve from engaging in normal childhood activities.

Parents representing different categorical areas can be expected to have differing needs in a program of involvement. Each categorical group has unique needs and each requires slightly different participation programs. Parents of deaf, autistic, and severely retarded children may need specialized instruction in how to stimulate and encourage the development of language and communication skills. Parents of blind children may need assistance in how to improve orientation skills and independent movement about the home and neighborhood. Parents of emotionally disturbed children may need training in behavior management. Parents of physically handicapped children may need assistance in managing the equipment and stimulating the development of physical coordination to improve mobility. Parents of gifted children may need help in how to keep the child busy with productive and meaningful activities. Parents in each categorical group need information regarding the area and what it means to the growth and development of their child. They need to know what kind of specialized care or attention may be essential to foster maximum carry over of the habilitation program they plan jointly with the school.

While there may be a temptation on the part of educators to plan a program for parents of all handicapped children within the district, such a program may not succeed unless it includes small interest groups that will meet the unique needs and answer the specific questions of parents in each categorical area. In all inclusive programs, the parents of low incidence children (e.g., visually and acoustically impaired and physically handicapped) may be neglected because their small numbers are overwhelmed by the larger number of emotionally impaired, learning disabled, and/or educa-

ble mentally impaired. Thus, programs of parent participation should attempt to group parents according to categorical interests at least some of the time so that questions can be answered and problems discussed that are specific to a disability area.

In addition to special needs of categorical groups, age levels of children dictate varying parental involvement. The parents of preschool children who are not in school for a full day may be more involved, both with formal school activities and informal peer group activities, than parents of secondary age pupils who are away from home for a more extended period of time. Additionally, the concerns of parents of one age range may not be shared with parents of another age range.

There are, however, some merits in having parents of older handicapped children meet with parents of younger children from time to time. Such meetings provide valuable interchanges and assist parents of younger children to anticipate problems that they may encounter in the future. Parents of older children may also have particular knowledge and skills to offer parents who have recently learned their child is handicapped. Programs of participation must allow for these individual differences in parents that result from the particular disability and age range of the child.

Vignette 6 Parent Education Classes

Margaret Thornton discovered that the parents of children enrolled in her primary class had little information about deafness. She surveyed the parents to assess their interest in a series of discussion sessions and further asked for specific questions they would like answered about hearing impairments. Finding that they were receptive, she planned a series of four sessions: a physician to discuss medical implications of the condition, the school psychologist and school social worker to discuss emotional and social aspects, a panel on educational techniques that included the teachers of the classes at the upper elementary, middle school, and secondary school levels, and finally a panel of adults from the community who were deaf and hard of hearing. The program was enthusiastically received by the parents and when they requested more information about educational aspects, she planned another series later in the year specifically devoted to educational intervention.

Teachers may also bring to the school unsatisfied lower level needs. Declining enrollments in many school districts contribute to uncertain feelings about the future of teaching positions (Level II). Public criticism of education, continuous community rejection of millage proposals, and emphasis on accountability may lead teachers to become suspicious (Level III) or question their competence (Level IV).

Thus, the goal of reaching the level of self actualization may be elusive for

both parents and teachers. For both groups, a climate for fostering growth in their abilities, for achieving confidence in themselves, and for using their inner resources should be created (Coletta, 1977).

Attitudes

Parents bring to the school their attitudes related to school, child, and the child's disability. Parental attitudes toward school vary considerably and, unfortunately, may be negative resulting from their own negative personal experiences in school or from their relationship with professionals in unsuccessful attempts to obtain services for their handicapped child. These negative attitudes affect their relationship with school personnel as well as their attitude toward the school's program for their child. Parents may be further alienated if their child progresses through school with decreasing enthusiasm for learning. The opportunity to change attitudes toward school from negative to positive exists in well planned programs of parent involvement (Coletta, 1977).

Parents vary in their attitudes toward child rearing. Many handicapped children have inadequate mothering because they are physically fragile at birth and sometimes spend weeks and months in a hospital receiving treatment. The separation requires that parents and child are constantly expected to adjust and readjust to each other. In addition, some parents' feelings of guilt and anxiety about having a handicapped child interfere with their normal mothering responses. Because of a real or imagined lack of responsiveness, maternal bonding may be inadequate and result later in a higher incidence of neglect, child abuse, and failure to thrive (Gallagher, 1975). Early intervention programs with a strong parent participation component give parents a sense of security in exercising their natural predisposition for child rearing. Parent involvement should continue throughout the school years, however, because problems arise at every age level, and parents need guidance and direction with child rearing through secondary school age.

Disability related attitudes tend to be unique to each categorical area. Until the birth of their handicapped child, parents may not have had any previous contact with a child or adult with a particular disability. Their attitudes toward the disability will often reflect stereotypic thinking based on folklore or the depiction of handicapped persons in literature or similar sources of indirect information. When the condition is congenital, additional misinformation abounds about whether it is also hereditary. Lack of factual information may lead to a strained marital relationship if each parent openly or secretly blames the other for the child's condition. A program of parent education designed to increase the knowledge base may provide a beginning for a program of parent involvement. Parents are usually receptive to learning more about the causes, impact on growth and development, and prognosis of the particular disability.

Attitudes of professional personnel toward parents and their handicapped children may not be entirely positive. Prior to entering school, parents and

their children have not uncommonly been exposed to hostile reaction from the professional community (Gorham, et al., 1975). In many cases, the public schools are no more hospitable than the professional community. With the advent of mainstreaming and Public Law 94–142, the situation should improve. While some negative attitudes are expressed concerning the presence of handicapped children in schools, there is similar resistance to parent involvement. Attitudes range from that of a superintendent who would not allow the formation of a parent group in his special school because it would be organizing the opposition to that of directors of special education and superintendents of special schools who encourage all variations of parent involvement in their programs. Resistant attitudes of professionals to handicapped children in the mainstream and to the involvement of parents in all aspects of school programing need to be faced openly and honestly. Since parent involvement in decisions regarding placement and programs is mandated by law (P.L. 94–142, 1975) and further, since handicapped children are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93–112, 1973) in having access to public schools, school personnel should examine their attitudes on these issues and through inservice education programs learn ways of using parents in the educational process. The new relationship between parents and school demands that professionals become consultants, sharing their knowledge and skill with parents to build a better educational program for the handicapped child (Gorham, et al., 1975).

Vignette 7 Handicapped Adults as Teachers

In meeting with a group of parents of young handicapped children, Brenda Murray, the preschool worker, realized that they had little understanding of the future abilities and limitations that faced their children as they were growing up and confronting adulthood. She arranged for a picnic followed by a discussion session for parents and children of all ages from preschool through secondary school. She also invited some adults from the community who had the same disability. The interchange was a valuable experience for all. The parents of the preschool group had an opportunity to see what might happen to their children when they grew up; parents of older children were able to see changes in educational programs since their children were that age and to realize that with changes in laws, modification in society's attitudes and values, and medical advances, life for the younger children was quite different than it had been for their children. In addition, they were able to see that many suggestions they had made earlier to improve the program were actually being implemented. The event was considered such a success that the parents requested it be conducted annually.

Values

Values include the attitudes, ideals, and customs held in high esteem by groups of people in a society. Values in a changing and heterogeneous society are not commonly accepted by all and hence values of one group may be in opposition to those of another group. Thus, in some instances handicapped children and their parents may bring a set of values to the school that may not be wholly appreciated by school personnel. For instance, physical aggression, which is usually abhorred by school personnel, may be the only defense and sole means of coping with environment for some inner city children; behavior that is approved by the home may not be approved by the school, such as school regulations prohibiting smoking when the adolescent is permitted to do so at home.

Professional personnel initiating a program of parent involvement should become familiar with and respect the value system of the parents. Generalizations concerning certain groups should not be accepted. For instance, school personnel should not conclude that parents from the lower socioeconomic levels are not interested in their children's education just because they are not active or do not seem interested in parent participation. Many times the lack of interest is due to the message they receive that school personnel are discouraging them from involvement either consciously or unconsciously. Transportation to the school may not be possible unless there is a good public transportation system. Even in communities where public transportation is available, there may be no money that can be diverted from the tight family budget for the fare. Babysitters may not be available and even if they are, there may again be a problem with money. Parents may be too proud to admit that their lack of participation is due to lack of money. School personnel should be sensitive to such situations and attempt to find ways to expedite the parents' visits to schools, such as through car pools or volunteers to bring them to school.

Vignette 8 Parent Child Relationships

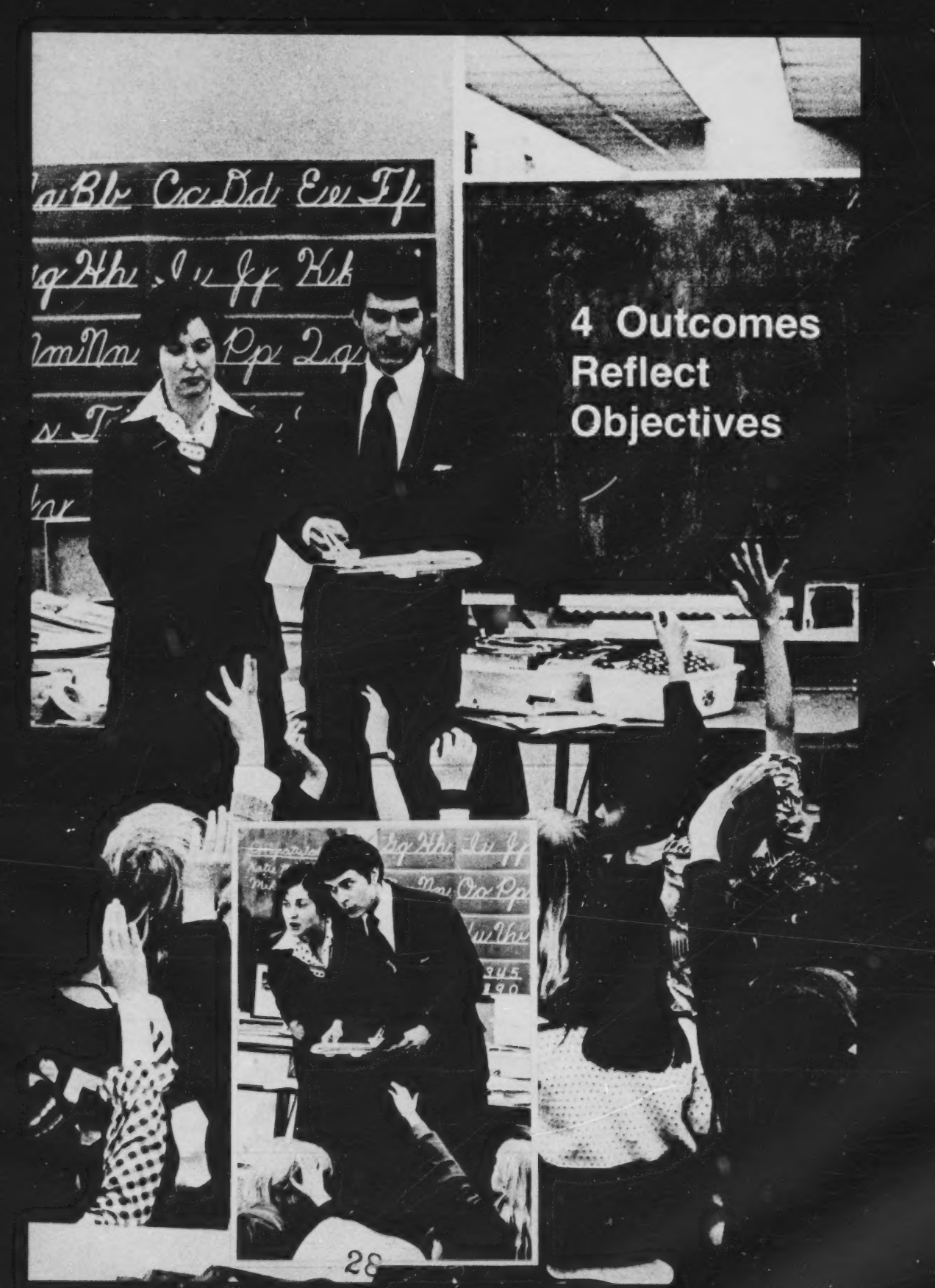
Donald Moseby, the special education teacher in an inner city elementary school, was concerned about the apparent lack of interest on the part of parents in following through on home training in language skills, reading in particular. Since he was working on an advanced degree from a nearby university, he consulted with one of his professors about the problem. Professor Taylor suggested that the activities to be completed at home include specific instructions about the task to be done: the setting, where it should be done, and the time that should be devoted to it, such as "Listen to your child read aloud for 10 minutes in a quiet corner of a room with both of you sitting close together on the same chair or couch. Turn off the television and radio. Insist that other children in the family either leave the room or sit

quietly and listen too." Mr. Moseby followed this advice and soon discovered that the parents were eager to help. Their previous seeming lack of interest was attributed to their not knowing exactly what to do nor how to do it. Mr. Moseby found that not only did the children's skills improve but also the parents' interest in their child's education increased and better parent-child relationships were evident.

The Hard to Reach Parent

In every program of parent involvement there will be some who are hard to reach. These parents, for whatever reason they are reluctant to participate, are often the most needful of such a program. Because of the great variation in reasons for not participating, it is difficult to offer specific solutions to this problem. Knowing the needs, attitudes, and values discussed in the previous section and their impact on reactions of parents toward schools may assist in identifying ways to involve such parents more intensively. Educators must also recognize the wide range of individual differences among parents and attempt to meet them on their level with a program designed for their specific needs. The principles of readiness, motivation, learning style, retention and transfer that operate in the classroom will also apply to a program of parent education.

Attitudes of professionals are critical in dealing with the hard to reach parent. In many cases, parents hear from professionals the message that the school is taking over. They sense from educators that they as parents have not done their job well and that the school must rectify these mistakes. This message is not communicated directly to parents but rather through indirect and nonverbal cues. They then may become discouraged and appear not to be interested in their children's education (Evans, 1977). In most instances, sensitivity to the needs and feelings of the parents and communicating the message that the school is working with them in a cooperative undertaking will help work with this hard to reach group.


4 Outcomes
Reflect
Objectives

School personnel, in carrying out their responsibilities to implement the parent involvement provisions mandated by Public Law 94–142 may choose to comply through active programs with parents or through minimal compliance. Those who choose the latter alternative may ultimately find themselves involved in open dissension with parents; those who choose the first alternative may find themselves engaged in a challenging and exciting experience that will benefit their educational programs for handicapped children, improve relationships with parents, and increase interaction between school and home. The contents of this chapter should provide guidance for such school personnel to initiate programs of parent involvement.

Commitment to Parent Involvement

Prior to initiating a program of parent involvement, school personnel must believe in and be convinced that parents are an important and essential component in the service delivery system (Coletta, 1977). Further, the development of a program to involve parents more intensively must be a stated and accepted goal of the school district with progress toward achievement viewed as a continuing process.

To secure commitment to such a goal, inservice education for administrators, teachers, and parents is necessary. The school board and administrative staff may be convinced that inclusion of parents in various aspects of the school program is a desirable goal but unless all school personnel and parents are committed to this position, the goal may never be achieved. Implementation of programs occurs at the individual building level. Thus, principals should be provided with opportunities to discuss all aspects of parent involvement to allay any concerns they may have. These inservice sessions should focus on the potential contributions of parents to the school program, procedures for initiating parent involvement, selection of appropriate activities to meet specific objectives, assigning roles for school personnel and for parents, and evaluating the results. If working with parents in a peer relationship is a new experience for principals, they should be allowed sufficient time to work through their own feelings and attitudes toward parent involvement before initiating a program. Programs begun at the building level without the full support of the principal accomplish little.

Teachers also should be provided with inservice education. Cohen (1977) found that while teachers verbalized support for the concept of parent participation, they were reluctant to engage in more formalized programs of working side by side with parents. With leadership from the principal, teachers who have not experienced a close cooperative working relationship with parents may learn through a program of inservice education new ways of using the skills that parents can bring to their classroom activities. Inservice programs for teachers might include information sessions on such topics as the rights of parents under Public Law 94–142; role playing sessions to acquire skills, such as working cooperatively with parents on the preparation

of the individualized education program; and discussion sessions to work through feelings about assuming a new role relative to parents.

It is not sufficient to prepare only school personnel for this cooperative working relationship; parents must also be provided with information and experiences that will prepare them for their role. The support of parents is vital in the implementation of new programs (Bridge, 1975). Parents who are interested in working cooperatively with school personnel will welcome opportunities for discussion, role playing, and other activities designed to give them information and skill in working more effectively with school personnel on behalf of their handicapped children.

Determining Objectives

After school personnel and parents have agreed to a goal of parent involvement and have acquired some understanding about their respective roles in the process, the next step is to determine a focus or the problem to be addressed in the program. A good beginning is to conduct a needs assessment to determine what parents need and want. The Parent Involvement Assessment Scale (Appendix A) provides a suggested instrument for this purpose. Parents may be requested to complete the scale anonymously in order to obtain honest responses should they feel reluctant to reveal themselves during a parent conference. Open-ended questionnaires may also be employed for problem identification. Such questions as the following might be asked: (a) what kinds of school decisions are appropriate for parent involvement; (b) what should be the extent of participation in such decisions as placement, curriculum planning, and evaluation of progress; (c) to what extent can parents contribute to the instructional program; (d) what kind of discussion groups should be initiated and on what topics; and (e) what kind of formal and informal communication links should be established (e.g., home visits, parent conferences, telephone contacts, sending letters or notes home at stated times). There are many focal points for parent participation and the one(s) most appropriate for the needs of a particular school and group of parents should be identified.

The next step in the process is to formulate specific objectives to approach the identified problem. Parents and school personnel should cooperatively determine the objectives. They should be stated clearly and in measurable terms, include a time limit, and be understood by both parents and professionals. For example, parents and teachers may decide that behavior management techniques for resolving discipline problems at home and school should be consistent. An objective of a program designed to focus on this problem might be to have both parents and teachers participate for six weeks in a weekly workshop session directed toward identifying techniques that can be used both at home and at school to deal with behavior management.

Parents and teachers should decide whether the objectives should be long range or short range to meet a specific need. If the objectives are long range, then a series of objectives may be necessary so that participants can move

from one level of competency to another. A series of objectives designed to be implemented over several years will avoid repetition of the same material each year for the same parents. One father lamented that he had been instructed in the same basic behavior management techniques each year his son was in elementary school; he appreciated the effort but wished there had been informational programs on a higher level each succeeding year.

Planning the Program

After the objectives are formulated, parents and professionals should select a systematic and coordinated process that will meet these objectives. The development of the process should follow principles employed in curriculum development: an appropriate procedure for imparting the knowledge and/or skills; a definition and assignment of the roles to participants; an outline for the proposed length of time; and procedures for evaluation.

The knowledge and/or skills to be included within the program should be arranged in sequential steps from simple to more complex and the learning activities selected should be appropriate to the needs of the parents. Such procedures might include conducting a series of informational sessions, organizing discussion groups or workshops, providing consultation to individuals, or demonstrating techniques through role playing. The necessary resources, which include time, personnel, and finances, must be identified.

The roles of participants should be defined and tasks assigned. It is possible that parents and teachers may assume different roles: parents may perform a teaching role; teachers may be the learners. The strengths and special skills of each participant should be identified and used. The goal should be to develop a partnership with the parental and teaching roles seen as complementary and essential to each other.

A time limit should be determined cooperatively. It may be easier for participants to commit three consecutive evenings to a particular program than three monthly meetings.

Finally, the program should include evaluation techniques to determine the effectiveness of the individual components. The evaluation should include an assessment of how parents perceive their involvement and the extent to which they feel they have played a meaningful role. Frequently, professionals view parent participation differently than parents. The evaluation should be consistent with the objectives. For instance, parents seeking to improve their management skills by working in a classroom or in other direct relationships with children will want an assessment by the professional on how they are performing that role. Giving regular feedback helps them improve their skills. Since the overall goal of parent involvement is improved programs for handicapped children, parents will want to see some positive changes in their child; teachers will want to see improvements in school performance. As a result of any program of parent involvement, there should be evidence of improved communication between home and school.

On a long term basis, programs of parent participation are best evaluated

by the amount of carry over to the next higher level in the child's educational program. Parents who have had successful and satisfying experiences of involvement in the educational program for their child will continue that involvement as the child proceeds through school. Further, parents and teachers learning to work together may take time but the involvement will become cumulative: the more parents become involved in the school, the more ways school personnel will find that parents can contribute. Some specific illustrations of how this process may be implemented are included in the next chapter.

Expected Outcomes

Anticipated outcomes from programs of parent involvement should have a beneficial effect on parents, the school, and the handicapped child.

Parents

Information given to parents through parent education programs helps them in a variety of ways. Through activities such as conferences, counseling, classroom volunteer work, and directed observation, school personnel can help parents translate the diagnosis and remedial recommendations concerning their child into meaningful terms and can help parents make a realistic assessment of the child's abilities and disabilities. This increased knowledge about their child's problems will help in understanding the problems' impact on school success. Parents trained in using materials, both homemade and commercial, for teaching within the home setting will acquire greater skills in working with the child, greater understanding and acceptance of educational limitations, and increased ability to participate in the formulation of the individualized education program.

Parent participation programs can help parents in their parenting role. Through such activities as group discussion sessions, questions about the child's handicap and its impact on the educational program can be clarified. Training and experience in facilitating the educational process within the classroom can help parents function more adequately in the teaching role they perform as parents. Through both formal and informal supportive help, teachers help parents gain confidence in themselves as parents.

Vignette 9 Workshops on Remediation

Carlos Santos recognized that cooperation of parents was essential to carry over into the home what the children were learning in her classroom. She discussed with her principal, George Norman, a plan to conduct a series of four workshops for two hour sessions the first Monday of the month. For each session, four stations directed to a specific learning problem were set up around the classroom. A student teacher, Mr. Norman, a parent volunteer, and Miss Santos

each managed a station. Parents were directed to the station that addressed their child's particular problem. The first hour was devoted to a discussion of the particular problem area at each station for the small group of parents, followed by a "show and tell" of available commercially made materials that would be useful in remediation. During the second hour parents went to the industrial arts room to construct similar games that could be used at home.

Group sessions with parents provide opportunities for increasing communication between parent and teacher and also between and among parents. Talking to other parents who have children with similar problems can result in mutual peer counseling and sharing of experiences.

Although viewed by some educators as preparing parents for a possible adversary role, awareness-assertiveness training can help parents to deal with the great number of professionals often required for their child's particular needs. Parents must know how to obtain the best possible services. This may be difficult unless they are comfortable in insisting that professionals provide needed services. Through training, parents develop skills in securing services, monitoring the progress of their child, and assessing the quality of the program offered.

The School

Through increased communication with parents about a particular child, school personnel are better able to understand the realities of the home environment and family interactions and gain greater insight into the child's unique needs. School personnel come to appreciate parents as a valuable resource for information and allies in planning better programs.

An effective program of parent involvement helps schools realize that parents can help their children if they are given adequate instructions and directions on how to do it. Parents learn what is going on in the school and develop a greater interest and appreciation for what schools are attempting to do. Schools gain valuable assistance from parents, individually and in groups, in problem solving and in decision making. Finally, an important outcome of parent involvement lies in public relations, where the cooperation of parents in getting support, particularly financial support, can make a valuable contribution.

One outcome of critical importance for the school may lie in the development of lines of communication between home and school that can act as a preventive measure in helping to resolve the conflicts that may arise from time to time regarding placement or program decisions (Rhodes & Sweeney, 1977). Schools that have open lines of communication with parents will probably experience fewer conflict situations and, in many instances when they do arise, resolution may be easier to achieve.

The Handicapped Child

The ultimate goal of parent participation is to improve educational programs for handicapped children. Knowledge derived from parents about the child should lead to improved diagnostic and remedial procedures. Meaningful parent participation in the formulation of individualized education programs should result in stronger, more appropriate teaching and learning. The greater interest of parents in the school program will help increase the child's interest in school. Greater transfer will occur from what is learned in school when the same techniques are practiced at home. Finally, the children themselves, through seeing their parents involved more actively in their educational process, learn that their parents, too, are teachers and they will become more open and accepting of parental help.

In the following section, more specific guidelines are provided for schools to initiate various types of parent participation programs.

5 Components of Parent Education Programs

Designing a Parent Education Program

Just as there are not, nor probably ever will be, enough therapists to personally deal with all of the mental health needs of our society (Reisinger, Ora, & Frangia, 1976), there probably will not be enough teachers to provide our nation's children with all of the education they need—nor would our society be able to support them. An alternative approach is to educate parents to be change agents or educators for their own children. Adherents of the three basic theoretical models, behavioral, psychodynamic, and client centered, have reported success in using parents in the treatment of their own children.

Since most special educators work closely with psychologists or psychiatrists, there is a temptation to draw on their theoretical positions in working with parents, particularly those of the behavioral or client centered models. Guerney (1969) presented examples of teaching parents behavioral principles of filial therapy, and the review by Reisinger and his colleagues (1976) gave many examples of such programs.

One of the programs escribed by Guerney (1969) was a procedure designed by Walder, Cohen, Breiter, Datson, Hirsch, and Leibowitz to teach behavioral principles to parents of disturbed children. The program is approximately 16 weeks long and during that time, the participant is taken through the various stages used to meet tne stated goals. The content of the program is basically behavioral.

Another program that Guerney described is his own plan of teaching parents filial therapy or play therapy. This program typically continues for 16 weeks although the time is open-ended. The reader is shown steps that are needed to teach parents to conduct play therapy sessions with their own children at home. The emphasis of the content is basically client centered.

While the content of the two programs lies at opposite ends of a continuum from a theoretical point of view, the procedures for instructing parents have many similarities that could be useful to the educator wanting to design a parent education program:

1. Both programs work with small groups of parents (six to eight).
2. During the first stage (four to six weeks), parents are given short lectures with an opportunity for discussion.
3. Also during the first stage, parents observe the techniques being employed through a one way mirror and practice their observation techniques.
4. Parents then have an opportunity to practice the techniques under observation and receive feedback.
5. Parents are then encouraged to attempt the techniques at home and they meet weekly to receive feedback and discuss the results of their work.

The pattern is one that educators often use in their teacher training programs: provide instruction, have observation time with an opportunity to discuss techniques, practice microteaching under supervision, and take over the teaching on one's own. Of course the final test of how well the "teacher" has learned would be whether or not he or she could teach someone else.

This is a good model for teaching and, therefore, if one is teaching parents something, whether it be how to perform play therapy, manage their time, or test their own children, it would be advantageous to follow these procedures.

With experience, knowledge of clientele, and planning, one will find that not all of the above steps are needed for all parent education programs. Some parents bring a great deal of know how to the sessions. The skillful leaders may be able to employ short cut methods, using only brief demonstrations or specific homework assignments to determine how quickly the program objectives can be met. Many programs will not take 16 weeks. The two described above require parents to become therapeutic agents, while many of the programs described under the section on "Parent Education Programs" are informational or have specific instructional outcomes.

Educators are experts at teaching and they should use their teaching skills in educating parents. Also, rather than turning to therapists for subject matter, they should teach as content the many things they already know. If a teacher is an expert at teaching reading, he or she can train parents to teach their children to read. If an instructor is an expert at managing children's behavior, parents can be taught how to manage behavior. The same holds true for teaching creativity or any number of skills. In implementing Public Law 94–142, each child is supposed to have a written individualized education program. As teachers develop skills in making their objectives behavioral, they can teach parents how to state their objectives for their own children in behavioral terms. Sharing these skills with the significant adults in the child's life enhances the opportunities for the child to accelerate growth academically, socially, emotionally, and physically, which is what education is all about.

Designing a parent education program is similar to developing a teaching unit for a group of students in the classroom. The educator needs to determine what the objectives for the unit are, what process he or she will go through to meet the objectives, and what inputs or resources will be needed to carry out the process. In other words, a lesson plan needs to be developed.

Developing a Lesson Plan

The first thing to determine is what the parents need or want to know. This can be done by conducting a needs assessment survey, by taking note of what comes up during parent conferences, by observing the children in class, or based on one's experience as a teacher. After the topic has been chosen, the teacher should then establish the objectives to be accomplished, the process to go through, and the inputs or resources needed.

For example, a teacher may be concerned that some of his or her students seem to have poor study habits. When homework is assigned, it often is not completed or it is poorly done. The teacher could set stronger consequences at school for incompleted homework, but it might be more profitable for the next teacher and for the students' total school life to teach the parents how to set up a learning environment in the home and reinforce good study be-

havior. If the teacher only wanted the parents to know how to arrange a place and a time schedule and how to set up a reinforcement menu for studying, this could probably be accomplished in three sessions. A fourth session might be needed to see how the program is working and if any problems come up.

Session one. The first week the instructor might teach the parents about study elements such as lighting, the need for a relatively quiet place, comfortable chairs, and getting materials ready. They could be shown classroom arrangement and how to organize their own homes for a good place to study. The parents' homework assignment could be to make a sketch of where the homework would take place and how the room would be set up. If time permits, the parents could be provided with pencils, paper, and rulers and begin the assignment. They might even be able to do all the design work at school before they go home.

Session two. The second meeting could be the next day or a week later. For the second session the instructor would probably need to prepare some weekly scheduling sheets with time blocked off in half hour periods for the parents to use. The instructor would discuss with them the importance of setting up a time to study that was agreeable to both parents and child. It would be necessary for the parents to observe at home for a few days and fill in the blocks that are already set, such as meal time, favorite television programs, and bedtime. This would be their homework assignment. The instructor would also discuss the value of placing study time before a favorite activity.

Session three. The third session would revolve around setting up a system where the children could receive points for studying, work completion, and work accuracy since this type of system was used in class and thus the children were already familiar with the procedures. The teacher might show the parents how the system worked in class and how they could adapt it to home type tasks. They can discuss what would be good reinforcers to use at home to motivate the children (Kroth, 1975), and the parents could develop their own reinforcement menu based on their individual value systems. Before leaving that evening each parent should have worked out a convenient place to study, a time schedule to be negotiated with the child, and an appropriate reinforcement menu with a record keeping system. Arrangements could be made for a fourth session to discuss how well the system was working or to invite parents in if they encounter problems.

Session four. By the fourth session the teacher should have some idea how well the program was working by analyzing the children's homework. The meeting would be a "show and tell" sharing meeting between parents and teachers. The parents would perhaps want to bring their records and the

teacher could share examples of homework. If the system needed to be modified, they might profitably discuss alternative ways to implement it.

In analyzing the program to teach parents how to improve their children's study habits, the instructor may come up with the following inputs, processes, and outputs, which could be charted:

1. *Inputs:*
   a. *Parents.* The instructor would need to identify the parents to be involved and make a concerted effort to get them to attend. Memos, letters, and phone calls could be used.
   b. *Room.* The teacher's own classroom might be the meeting room. This would have to be cleared with the principal, the custodian, and the security service.
   c. *Materials.* Paper, pencils, and rulers would be needed for the first session and weekly time schedules for the second. The teacher could display some examples of a reinforcement menu for the third session and some sample lists of potential reinforcers in the home.
   d. *Miscellaneous.* Coffee, punch, and cookies could be provided for the four meetings. The instructor could alternate with the parents in providing them. This would keep personal costs down, and it might help to insure that the parents would come if they had to bring something.
2. *Processes:*
   a. *Lecture.* The instructor would need to prepare three minilectures for the first three sessions. They should be short but informative.
   b. *Discussion.* Time should be allotted for discussion in each of the four sessions. Discussion questions might be prepared to promote conversation.
   c. *Demonstration.* The instructor would have to set up the room to demonstrate some of the points to be made. This might include private places to study and also some demonstration of how a point system works.
   d. *Workshop.* Part of the process would be to have the parents prepare some things at school before going home. Space should be provided for activities such as writing and sketching room designs.
   e. *Homework.* After each of the first three sessions, it would be helpful to give a homework assignment such as sketching a study room design, analyzing time frames, and setting up a reinforcement menu and a recording system.
   f. *Phone calls.* The parents should be encouraged to call at any time if they have questions or encounter problems that they did not anticipate.
3. *Outputs:*
   a. *Study place.* Parents would design and arrange a place for study. They would be able to verbalize information about elements such as lighting, materials, noise, and privacy.
   b. *Study time.* Parents would negotiate a time for study each day with

their children. They would arrange the time before high probability events such as favorite television shows, and they would see that the schedule was maintained or renegotiated.

c. *Reinforcement menu.* The parents would design and write up a reinforcement menu and implement it.
d. *Improved homework.* The teacher should be able to see an improvement in homework assignments (i.e., a higher percentage complete and correct than before the parent education program).
e. *Parental satisfaction.* The parents should be able to indicate that the workshop was valuable to them and their children. An indication of satisfaction would be a high percentage of attendance at the meetings.

The above is an example of how a teacher could design a parent education program. The program was functional and needed and the content was familiar to the teacher. It did not take many outside resources and was not expensive. It had definite parameters. The time required was spelled out (three sessions, with a fourth optional). It was not aimed at all parents, so if three or four attended, it would meet the teacher's goal.

Any teacher, principal, special education coordinator or director can design a parent education program by relying on the good teaching practices that are used with children in the classroom. In most cases, it is best not to have the parent groups too large, just as a teacher keeps the classroom groups small enough to individualize instruction when necessary. The objectives should be clear, and generally the program should be short enough so that parents can maintain a high level of interest. It is usually easier to add more sessions if the demand is there than it is to try to require attendance for long periods of time. Parent education programs are often enhanced if parents have something to do, such as teach their children something, test their children, follow a schedule, make something, or help equip a room. In other words, parents should be engaged in an activity. Rather than educators trying to learn how to teach play therapy or become certified in parent effectiveness training, there are many things that they know about how children learn that they can share with parents in their own individually developed and designed parent education programs.

Principal Power

State and federal regulations require parent involvement in special education placement and program planning. A majority of the school boards in the United States have special education children. In the end, it is usually up to the building level principal to see that these policies or regulations are carried out.

Some principals want a minimum of parental interference in the educational program. They see that the required number of conferences are scheduled. They hold PTA meetings, and they contact parents when children cause problems at school. If they have a parent advisory group, they use the meetings to advise the parents as to what is going on in the school rather than

to seek advice. They request that no parent contacts be made without clearance from their office and, in general, discourage special parent group meetings or home visitations.

Other principals have viewed the regulations and school board policies as an opportunity, an endorsement from the upper echelon, and therefore, a springboard for active parent involvement in the educational process. Rather than merely carrying out the mandates, they take active leadership roles.

Vignette 10 Types of Parent Involvement

David Syme is the principal of Kirtland Elementary School. In addition to the regular education program, the school has two classes for behaviorally disordered children, a resource room for mildly handicapped children, a part time speech clinician, a part time itinerant teacher for gifted children, a part time counselor, and access to other special education services on a need basis. There are the usual appraisal and review conferences for placement of special education children and individualized education planning conferences. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year for progress reporting and there are a number of PTA meetings. While this forms the basic parent involvement, Mr. Syme has added the following components, which have involved some of his parents more intimately in the education of their own children:

1. *Inservice for teachers.* During the previous school year there was at least one full day inservice session for teachers to discuss parent conferences. This also included information on other services that might be available for parents. Teachers were encouraged to explore alternative reporting systems, as well as the traditional systems.
2. *Parent selection of teachers.* For a number of years, Mr. Syme has invited parents to visit classrooms during the spring. Parents are able to observe the classes that their children will attend the following year. They may then select a first and second choice of teachers they would like to have. Almost every parent who chooses to participate in the program is accommodated with one of their choices.

   Mr. Syme, of course, reserves the right for the final placement decisions. He must take into consideration the number of boys and girls per class, the total number of children in class, the make up of classes that are cross grade classes (i.e., 3rd, 4th, and 5th), and the possible need to scatter some cliques of children. Since only a little over half of the parents take advantage of the opportunity, there seems to be the needed flexibility for the system to work and parents are pleased to be a part of the placement process.

3. *Parent education programs.* During the current school year, Mr. Syme encouraged his teachers to conduct their own parent education programs. One of his teachers of behaviorally disordered children, Carol Pitts, joined with Katie Braziel, an itinerant teacher, and Kathy Hertz, the counselor, to design and implement a program for parents whose children were moving on to a middle school the following year. They provided the parent with information, some assertiveness training, and an opportunity to meet the next year's teachers. Mr. Syme joined with Judy Inman, an itinerant teacher for the gifted, to design and conduct a program for selected parents of the gifted in which they taught the parents to test their own children. They used some of the instruments commonly used by the schools and then met on individual followup conferences. He also joined with Ms. Hertz to conduct the Sequential Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) program. This program was for parents of regular education students. By conducting these programs with coleaders, it is possible for one of the leaders to be gone if something comes up that requires principal, counselor, or teacher attention. It also provides credibility to the programs if the principal is participating.
4. *Comfort index.* While no survey was conducted to try to determine how parents felt about the accessibility of school personnel and a willingness on the part of the personnel to work with parents, there were some indications that would lead one to believe that parents felt welcomed in the building. Attendance was extremely high at the parent education meetings. It was no surprise to find one or more parents in the building, visiting and having coffee in the lounge. The gym was open a number of evenings for basketball or scouting groups. One evening a group of parents and teachers were meeting in the library to discuss playground equipment.

The activities mentioned in the preceding vignette were some of the components that a principal added to the basic parent involvement program. Existing personnel were used and the goals were attainable. The principal, by participating in the various programs, provided a model for the rest of the staff. He could not do it alone but he could provide leadership.

Some school administrators or program directors are apprehensive about too much parental involvement. There is a fear that, in their enthusiasm, parents will try to run the school, march on the board of education, and in effect, cause waves. While these things are possible, of course, the value of an informed and active parent group cannot be underestimated. It is much easier to try new programs, use creative teaching techniques and have advocacy for bond issues, or appropriate teacher-student ratios, with parental support. As Bridge (1976) stated:

> Parents can make or break school innovations, and unfortunately they are most often cast in the role of spoilers, since it is easier to organize parents for resistance than assistance. But successful innovations, especially individual-level interventions, require parent involvement, and schools can amplify their impact by mobilizing the resources of the home and paying clear attention to the nature and quality of home-school linkages. (p. 384)

Parent Education Programs

Teachers, counselors, and administrators must develop strategies to facilitate child growth academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. These strategies are developed through years of experience, university training, reading, and inservice training programs and are usually based on theoretical structures. Specialists (e.g., special education teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists) usually go through extended and supervised training programs of practical experiences with exceptional children. Parents, on the other hand, seldom have any formalized educational training for being a parent, let alone being the parent of a handicapped child. Since parents and other family members will undoubtedly have a more significant and longer effect on a child's growth and development than any single teacher, the educational personnel have a unique opportunity to provide parents with educational programs. These programs may range from short duration to a long term, multifaceted series. They may be highly specific, covering one objective, or general, aimed at fulfilling many objectives. They may consist of a simple structure in which information is provided parents or a complex one in which parents are required to demonstrate skills under supervision. No matter what their structure, the programs are developed to provide parents with coping skills and to enable them to assist in the education of their own children.

In establishing a parent education school based program, there are many considerations and among these are the following:

1. Parents are not a homogeneous body. As Bridge (1976) pointed out, in addition to the variables of ethnicity, religion, education, and income, a wide variety of attitudes, values, and child rearing practices must be taken into account. These variables exist in parents of exceptional children regardless of the exceptionality and must be kept in mind when developing parent programs. For instance, it is possible that some parents may be unreceptive to a program designed to teach behavior modification techniques because of the values they hold, while another group may be put off by nondirective techniques because of the lack of structure.
2. Parents will have different needs at different times. At early stages of child rearing, parents have greater control over the child's consequences than during adolescence. Thus, programs on behavior management may be viewed as ineffective by parents of older children. Teaching parents to be assertive with school personnel may not have as much meaning in an elementary school that is small in numbers and responsive to children's needs, but the training may be important to parents whose children are

entering large institutions with complex structures. Parents whose children have been in a program for learning disabilities for a number of years may not respond well to a parent program entitled "What is LD?" but the same program may be quite effective for parents whose children are just recently diagnosed.

3. Parent groups do not have to be big to be effective. There is no definitive research as to the optimum size of parent groups; however, a number of authors suggest that six to 12 seems to be a good size for working groups. The authors have participated in that range from large groups to a small one that consisted of one parent and five professionals. (The latter is not recommended.) Teachers often rate their group attendance in respect to the potential attendance (i.e., "Only 30% of my parents were there."). Rather than lament the fact that 70% did not attend, it is more important to make sure that the 30% who did attend were welcomed, appreciated, and provided with a meaningful experience. It is often much more productive to work with a small number of people who want information, skills, and knowledge than a large group that is resistant.
4. Timing is crucial. A good working knowledge of the community may help one avoid common pitfalls. One of the authors participated in a program where many of the parents worked various night shifts. To try to hold any type of parent meeting in the evening was doomed. It was not a lack of interest in their children but the necessity to keep bread on the table that deterred the parents. Some nonworking mothers might prefer to have programs during the day so that they can be at home with their families at night, while it may be difficult to get working parents to attend a daytime meeting.

   While educators may resist holding meetings on weekends, it may be one way of making programs available to parents. In a small town in Costa Rica, parent-teacher meetings were held on Sunday afternoons once a month. Because many of the farm workers came to church on Sunday but were unable to attend during the week, it seemed to be a natural time to get together.
5. Lack of attendance is not necessarily a lack of concern. Any single professional is apt to forget the many different demands that can be placed upon the parents of an exceptional child. Depending upon the degree of handicapping condition, it is possible that the speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and special educator may expect the parent to carry out a home treatment program. The social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist may want to work on personal family problems. The doctor or nurse may want to be sure that a health and nutrition program is carried out. In addition, the parent may meet regularly with the welfare worker and they often have a number of other children who deserve some of their time. Seldom are these services coordinated by a family advocate and as a result, parents do not show up for meetings.

Prior to launching parent education programs in the schools, it may be

desirable to carefully analyze the needs of and demands on the parent to be served. This analysis can be carried out by a parent action and advisory council set up at a school level. The survey might be done by questionnaires sent home by students, by random sampling techniques over the phone, or by home visits by parents or teachers.

Vignette 11 PTA Alternatives

Kenneth Lachmann is the principal of Collette Park Elementary School. In addition to the regular education program, Collette Park has a number of special education programs. Mr. Lachmann and his PTA board decided that it would be desirable to consider an alternative approach to their traditional PTA program format. Instead of having monthly meetings, they would offer parents a number of parent education programs and provide short minisessions for small groups of interested parents and teachers.

The PTA board selected 24 topics to offer to the parents. They sent out a questionnaire to all of the parents asking them to indicate choices and to sign their name and phone number. Almost 200 parents responded; thus, they had an indication of what programs to offer. It was interesting to find that parents "mainstreamed" themselves, that is, parents of both special and regular education children selected topics such as parent-teacher conferences and discipline. Small group sessions were then offered to the parents.

The growth of special education programs has been paralleled by a growth of interest in parent involvement. Many school systems have tried to provide programs for parents centering around their children's handicap. While this practice has value, one needs to consider the value of "mainstreaming parents" as well as children. Merle Karnes (1977) noted that "involving parents of handicapped along with parents of the nonhandicapped presents a challenge, one with far-reaching implications" (p. 90). As she pointed out, the influence of parents on the attitudes of their children is greater than that of individual teachers. One must assess the needs of parents. How to communicate with children, how to help children at home with school related materials, or how to have constructive discipline are topics that may apply to parents regardless of whether the child is handicapped or nonhandicapped. As Karnes suggested, "Approach the parent as an individual and provide alternate forms of involvement" (p. 91).

The following are descriptions of programs that have been offered to parents. While most of the programs have been used for parents of exceptional children, a school may want to open them to all parents in order to increase awareness on the part of parents of regular class children, to increase attendance, and because the information often applies to parents regardless of the type of children they have—remembering that parents are not a homogene-

ous group. A series of programs might be presented to parents in menu form, giving the title, number of sessions, time offered, size of group required, and a brief summary of the contents.

Managing Time

Before parents can even begin to consider techniques of teaching their own children or learning new skills of communication, they may need help in learning to organize and schedule their time and activities. This is particularly true when many professionals are requesting parental involvement in a variety of activities. At the secondary school level, the home economics teacher is a logical person to teach this type of short course. Another source is the County Cooperative Extension Service, supported by the US Department of Agriculture. As part of their role, County Agents or County Home Economists often teach home demonstration units on a variety of topics. If they are unavailable, they usually have handouts that can be used by teachers, counselors, school administrators, or parents. With a brief review, any number of people could conduct sessions on this important task. Organizing aids can be developed or purchased, such as calendars, daily schedules, and priority lists.

Managing Money

Exceptional children can be and often are a drain on the family income. There may be special diets and medications that need to be purchased. Quite often, special therapies are recommended and summer programs seem advisable. All these have a price tag. For children with learning disabilities, doctors sometimes recommend the use of tape recorders and typewriters. Children who have hearing problems need hearing aids, and children with vision problems need glasses and special checkups. Professionals often recommend the purchase of special equipment, books, games, and magazines for gifted children. Physically handicapped children require special equipment and furniture. Special tutoring, babysitters, respite care, schools, camps, and transportation all may need to be budgeted.

While it is true that there are community agencies available to help families of exceptional children with services, supplies, and equipment, short courses on budgeting can be helpful. Depending upon the amount of time available, the course could include credit buying, consumer shopping, and community resources, in addition to setting up a budget system. Home economics teachers at the secondary level can be invaluable in teaching courses such as nutrition and prenatal care, and the County Cooperative Extension Service, mentioned earlier, has units on managing money.

The areas of managing time and money are critical for many families. They usually precede dealing with feelings and attitudes because some of the hostility and despair can be alleviated when one finds ways to keep bread on the table. Often, it is not that poor people are less concerned about their children than wealthy parents but that they are absorbed in survival at basic levels.

Community Services

Large communities usually put together a booklet describing the various community services and agencies that are available to the public. If a school has formed a Parent Action and Advisory Committee, the committee might compile a booklet relevant to the needs of parents of the particular school area (Kroth, 1975). A major problem with the listings is keeping them updated. Contact people change, fees change, locations change and the focus of the agencies sometimes changes. A good example of a handbook for parents of exceptional children that includes national sources and information on taxes and social security is *Direction Information for Parents of Handicapped Children: Agencies, Child Advocacy Groups, Sources of Financial Assistance* (National Learning Resource Center of Pennsylvania, N.D.). This handbook could serve as a model for those who intend to develop their own.

After the material has been accumulated, a parent program may be developed to provide interested parents with the information and ways of using the various agencies. These sessions could be conducted by the parents who compiled the information, school personnel who have contact with the agencies, such as counselors or special educators, or members of the various agencies.

Professional Helpers

When parents have a handicapped child, professionals are available for specialized service. While it is not crucial for some parents to know the difference between a psychiatrist and psychologist or an ophthalmologist and an optometrist, those who require such services should be aware of the differences. Schools offering parent education programs will find the booklet entitled *Who Can Help?* (National Learning Resource Center of Pennsylvania, N.D.) useful. They might use it in a program that includes a discussion of the various services available in the public schools such as counselors, specialists in reading, special education coordinators, teachers, nurses, and occupational therapists. Many parents have misconceptions of the roles of the various specialists in the schools or do not know of their existence. While such a program would probably be most appropriate for parents of children receiving these services, other parents may want to know how they can be used for children in the regular school programs.

Managing Behavior

There are at least two good reasons to provide parent education in managing child behavior. The first is to provide parents with information about techniques being used in the school that are intended to accelerate children's academic, social, emotional, and physical growth. The outcome of such an objective would be a cooperative relationship that facilitates the educational process. The second reason is to provide the parents with techniques to use at home that can help the parent-child relationship.

This area of parent education has been the focus of a great deal of attention

in recent years. The use of parents as change agents was extensively reviewed by Reisinger and his colleagues (1976), and it would seem that programs involving either a behavioral approach or a client centered approach are most commonly used and applicable in the public school setting. There are packaged programs available to teach parents the behavioral approach (McDowell, 1974) or the client centered approach (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976), which should help school personnel provide this type of education for their parents. In addition, these approaches have been described in the literature (Guerney, 1969; Reisinger, et al., 1976) for those wishing to become more familiar with either approach.

Probably both approaches or a combination of the two should be offered to the parents. If parents are assumed to have a variety of value systems and attitudes, then it would seem logical to provide programs that they can apply within these systems. If only one approach is offered, it will usually reflect the value system of the person administering the programs (i.e., an open classroom concept would provide a client centered approach, while a data based system would provide a behavioral approach and would not necessarily be applicable to the client, who in this case is the parent). If one believes that different approaches are effective for different people or in the fact that differential diagnosis leads to differential treatment, then varied programs should be available. It is also possible that the two programs will have meaning to the same sets of parents at different times. Parents who are having problems with specific behaviors at home may want to learn how to set up a reinforcement menu or be more consistent in their application of rewards and punishments. The same parents at a later date may be concerned with power struggles and with keeping lines of communication open and may need to learn techniques of active listening and other effective parenting skills.

Offering the programs at the school level is not meant to replace the more specific long term therapeutic programs offered by qualified professionals. By being practical, easily available, and conducted by knowledgeable school personnel, they should serve as a preventive measure and provide solutions to common, everyday problems. They may be thought of as avenues whereby professionals share their successful techniques for managing behavior with parents.

Communication Skills

An area that both teachers and parents could profit from is the development of improved communication skills. Working relationships deteriorate when communication breaks down. The problem of establishing a program on communication is one of where to start and how far to go. One might consider the communication between parent and child, parent and teacher, parents and other parents, or parents and the array of professionals they deal with. It is also necessary to consider the differences between verbal and nonverbal communication. This is crucial because adults frequently attend to what children say rather than what they do, while children attend to what adults do rather than what they say (Kroth & Simpson, 1977).

Many of the client centered approaches to parent education stress aspects of communication skills (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976; Gordon, 1970). Active listening skills are explained in these materials (Kroth, 1975). Parents can be aided in discussions of transactional analysis (Berne, 1964; Harris, 1967; James & Jongeward, 1971). Learning to send clear adult messages should help in interaction with professionals as well as with children.

Attention to nonverbal communication also is reflected in books and articles in magazines. Hall (1959) and Knapp (1972) are two authors who addressed this issue competently.

Since many of the sources mentioned contain practice exercises, it would seem appropriate that this aspect of parent education contain skill training. Parents can practice active listening with each other. They could try different postures in attending to content in order to feel the effects of environmental conditions on communication. They could practice sending "I" messages and they could practice using reflective feeling statements with each other. While there would need to be didactic instruction, a workshop format would allow application of what is being learned. If there are a number of sessions, parents could discuss the use of these techniques at home with their children. There is an increasing amount of attention being paid to the importance of communication skills and evidence that they can be learned (Carkhuff, 1973; Goldberg, 1975; Ivey, Normington, Miller, Morrill & Haase, 1968).

Teaching Parents To Teach Their Children To Read

Half of the nation's children by definition of test norms must be below the 50th percentile in reading or any other subject matter. This is a difficult concept to convey to parents and it is one of the problems involved in using standardized tests. Many of our exceptional children fall in this bracket, but many other children who are not labeled exceptional also will be below grade level.

Parents who find that their children are below grade or who have been notified that their children are having reading problems often sincerely want to do something about the problems. School personnel, on the other hand, have traditionally discouraged parents from working with their own children at home. There has been a fear that parents will apply too much pressure or make reading an undesirable activity. Most parents, however, cannot leave the problem alone. They are desperate to do something and if not given some assistance, may take inappropriate action. It is definitely better to provide parents with some instruction as to what they can do at home to help their children than to leave it to chance.

Vignette 12 Training Parents To Teach Reading

Betty Jones, who teaches in Albuquerque, designed a program to train parents to teach their children to read. Children in the fifth grade

who were having reading problems were identified by their teachers, and parents were apprised of the reading program. Four sessions were scheduled. The first three sessions were instructional with emphasis on phonics and with activities to do at home. The fourth session was held approximately four weeks later and was a followup meeting to discuss the programs that the parents had carried out. In addition to phonics training, parents were instructed in record keeping and procedures for setting up a reinforcement menu. Attendance for the sessions averaged 78%.

The program was so successful that other parents requested a second series. Children from second grade classes were chosen and the program was replicated with minor modification. Attendance for the second group averaged 91%. Parents responded very favorably to the parent education program. It was specific and gave the parents precise, meaningful activities to perform at home.

Teaching Parents To Test Their Own Children

Parents have the right to the information that schools have about their children. Since all children eligible for special education services have an extensive evaluation, the parents have access to a great deal of test data. Usually this information is interpreted to parents in a conference with school personnel.

During the 1975–1977 school years, University of New Mexico Professors Roger Kroth and Henry Pepe designed and conducted a program with Albuquerque Public School personnel to teach selected parents of learning disabled and behaviorally disordered children how to test their own children at home. The major objectives of the program were to try to determine if parents could test their children reliably, to make parents better informed about tests and testing, to help parents understand their own children better, and to establish trust between home and school. These objectives were accomplished. The procedures and results of the program are discussed in *Parent Conferences as a Teaching Strategy* (Kroth & Simpson, 1977).

Judy Inman, special education teacher, and David Syme, elementary principal in Albuquerque, restructured the program by using some different instruments and provided the program for selected parents of gifted children. They obtained similar results. Parents and children responded favorably to the program. As in the reading program previously discussed, attendance was very high. Those who could not attend a group instruction meeting usually arranged a makeup session with the teacher.

The program took from two to three instructional sessions and individual conferences with each of the parents. In this respect, it was time consuming but the participants usually felt that the resulting understanding and close relationship were worth the effort. Much of the mystique about testing was alleviated. In general, parents were quite conscientious in following direc-

tions and high levels of trust were generated between parents and teachers. Efforts became cooperative rather than combative.

Assertiveness Training

Assertiveness training may be beneficial overall, but when it is tied to specific events, it can create even greater interest on the part of parents. Educational institutions have become large over time, and secondary schools especially can become intimidating to parents with their many teachers, counselors, and administrators. By the time the parents reach the person they want to talk to, aggression may have taken over, and parents and school personnel may find themselves in a stalemate situation.

Vignette 13 Preparation for Middle School

During the spring of 1977, Carol Pitts, special education teacher of a self contained elementary class of behaviorally disordered children, Katy Braziel, itinerant teacher, and Kathy Hertz, elementary counselor, designed a program for the parents of exceptional children who were being promoted to a middle school. The program consisted of two group meetings and individual meetings between parents and secondary school personnel with a followup evaluation meeting between Ms. Pitts and the participating parents.

In preparation for the sessions, the children were asked to respond to the question, "What scares you most about middle school?" The written responses of the children were used on the cover of the program agenda sent to the parents. In addition, many phone calls were made.

The first session included a venting session by the parents of their concerns and then a discussion about how to approach the middle school personnel. Topics such as the proper timing, the fact that teachers need reinforcement, the causes and effects of aggression and assertiveness, and ways to contact school personnel to prevent problems were discussed. The second session was arranged with middle school personnel present to discuss their programs. The parents were then provided with role playing practice on ways to most advantageously observe, report and discuss their child and his needs. The homework assignment was to set up an appointment with their child's new teacher and carry it out.

The results of the program were very positive. Attendance averaged 90% for the two work sessions and 80% for the meetings with the middle school personnel. The parents' attitudes were much more positive in a pre/post followup questionnaire about the transfer to middle school.

Teaching parents how to be assertive rather than aggressive can further home-school relationships. When parents see that teachers care and that they

are willing to work on problems for the benefit of children, then anxiety is alleviated.

Making Materials at Home

Many elementary teachers have skill in making arts and crafts projects, decorations, and gifts. At the secondary level, industrial arts teachers, home economics teachers, and art teachers are good resources. Also, the County Cooperative Extension Service personnel have projects that they use for home demonstration units. One parent education program that teachers have found productive involves conducting brief series of workshops on how to make inexpensive gifts and decorations with materials commonly found in the home.

In discussing the Home and School Institute (HSI) program that has examined innovative ways to involve parents actively in the school, Mattox and Rich (1977) suggested that with declining enrollments an empty classroom might be converted into a "parents place." This could serve as a workroom where parents exchange recipes and patterns and make things. Examples of activities that parents can do at home to provide educational experiences for their children can be kept on file.

Most elementary teachers have learned to make do with empty egg cartons, cereal boxes, paper sacks, packages of seeds, flour paste, balloons, sparkle, and other inexpensive items to brighten up the lives of children. These techniques can be shared with parents in meaningful ways.

Teaching Conferencing Skills

According to the *Phi Delta Kappan* (1976), "Some three-fourths of U.S. school districts schedule formal conferences at which parents discuss their children's progress with teachers . . . . There is a trend toward parent conferences which is sufficient that by 1980, 90% of all U.S. Districts will be using them" (p. 633). In addition, special educators have interpretation conferences, entry and exit conferences, and other nonscheduled conferences with parents. Unfortunately, many teachers have little training in holding conferences and most assuredly parents have not had any training. Often, the parents' experience is limited to one or two 15 minute visits a year. What should they ask? What should they prepare beforehand? What information can they provide the teacher that will be helpful?

It would be helpful to both parents and teachers if a parent education program could be designed and offered to parents on conferencing skills. The objectives of such a program might include techniques of obtaining and providing meaningful information and learning to problem solve with teachers. Parents could be provided with a list of questions to ask such as the following:

1. How does the teacher feel about homework?
2. Does my child have an adequate attention span?

3. Does my child learn best through hearing, or reading, or manipulating materials?
4. What does my child do during free time activities?
5. Does the teacher send home papers and, if so, how does the teacher want me to respond?
6. What types of discipline does the teacher use and what is effective with my child?
7. Are there books I should be reading or materials that I should have around the house?
8. Are there any things we should work on at home to improve study habits, attention to task, and creativity?
9. Is my child's progress comparable to his achievement?
10. What recurring fears does my child have?

Parents who are provided with this type of educational program may also need some practice in how to handle the defensive teacher. Many teachers are not prepared to handle parents who question their teaching procedures. The intention of this program is not to put home and school at odds, so parents will probably benefit from some role playing practice. Rehearsals have been found to be effective in many situations that may be unfamiliar or that may require skill. Athletes often rehearse through pregame planning, actors through run throughs, and doctors before operations, and it would seem that parents should be taught to rehearse for conferences.

Teachers can show parents videotapes of their child's behavior in the classroom and talk about it together. This type of educational program should result in more meaningful discussions about child growth and techniques that can be used to plan cooperatively. Teachers have been able to get away with minimal conferencing skills because in 15 minutes usually little is offered beyond a brief report of progress and perhaps a mention of trouble spots. This type of program may also extend the length of conferences.

Readin', 'Ritin', and 'Rithmetic at Home

Parents often want to know what they can do at home to facilitate child growth in the academic areas. Short of actually teaching a skill, games and activities are a delightful way to build and maintain skills. Games have the advantage of involving the family members in a meaningful interaction. Teachers are usually a rich source of games and activities that they have collected to enrich, motivate, or fill free time in meaningful ways. Publications such as *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, *Instructor*, and *Teacher* usually have suggestions that can be used. Children's magazines such as *Highlights* and *Humpty Dumpty* contain activities. Books supply vast numbers of games and, of course, there are commercial games available in most stores.

A parent education program could be developed to familiarize parents with these sources of games and how to choose appropriate activities. Games could be categorized according to age level, subject matter taught, or cost (Kroth, 1975).

Practical suggestions could be given to parents on setting the stage for play and for learning to play meaningfully with their own children. Questions of how to handle children who have to win or who will not compete could be discussed. When to play and how long or what kinds of games to play on trips and rainy days might be topics for this type of parent education program.

While many educators take it for granted that everyone knows how to play and knows the advantages of play as a learning medium, this is not the case. It is often refreshing to find that families can have fun together other than by watching television. This type of program might help break the television umbilical cord.

What is a Learning Disability?

There has been a great deal of national attention on learning disabilities. Television programs such as *Puzzle Children* and segments of *60 Minutes*, in addition to articles in popular magazines, newspapers, and radio spots, have made the general public aware that there are children who have specific learning problems. Probably a majority of the elementary schools and an increasing number of secondary schools have some type of resource room or itinerant services for these children.

There are at least two types of programs that might be designed for parents in a school. The first type would be for parents who do not have a child in a special education program. This would be an awareness program and would be used to promote understanding of the exceptionality. The program might include a brief description of the characteristics and a discussion of the services that are available in the local school district. Parents could be informed as to how to refer their children for evaluation and what such an evaluation would entail. The film strip *Walk in Another Pair of Shoes* would be helpful to show, with time allowed for discussion. This program could be conducted by the resource room teacher and it might include a parent of a learning disabled child.

A more extensive program for parents of a learning disabled child might be modeled after the one described by McWhirter (1976). This program is a series of six to eight group sessions that includes definitions, information about directional and laterality problems, and auditory and visual perceptual problems. Parents are involved in a number of experiential activities and there is ample time for discussion. Parents are encouraged to read and material is made available. Each session includes some didactic presentation, some activities and time to discuss. One of the activities McWhirter described is the use of case studies of famous people who might or might not have been classified as learning disabled at the present time and who adapted as adults. A more extensive presentation of the materials used in the program is provided in the Spring 1976 issue of the *Devereux Forum Journal*. McWhirter reported that attendance remains high at this series of sessions. Parents need information and this is one strategy for providing it.

With the practice of placing children in the least restrictive environment becoming more prevalent, mentally retarded children who were in special classes or special buildings are becoming more a part of the regular school programs. Children who are classified as severely and profoundly retarded and who were formerly found in institutions are being bused to elementary and secondary schools. Many parents of these children and parents of children in the regular educational programs have voiced concern about how this move will affect their children. Since parental attitudes and behaviors are often modeled by their children, it is important to set up opportunities for early interaction between parents and educators to help provide cooperative relationships in the process. There are a number of parent education strategies that might be employed, each with its strengths and weaknesses. If the school system has a parent advisory group at the building level with representatives of exceptional children as well as other parents, this might be a good place to discuss alternative strategies. Parents whose children attend schools where mainstreaming has already been successfully accomplished could be brought in as resource people.

One approach might be to have a general program at the building level including some information about mental retardation, with a discussion of characteristics and the need for equal education and then have the group break into small discussion groups, with a parent of a mentally retarded child and a group facilitator in each group. Sample discussion questions could be provided. Local members of The Council for Exceptional Children and the Association for Retarded Citizens could help to lead groups. The strength of this approach is that it gets the issue up front and parents can meet with each other on a face to face basis. The weakness is that anxieties may be pronounced enough that people say things that are hard to retract.

Another option is to offer a parent education program, such as the programs discussed under the previous section, to parents on a one time basis. This could attract concerned or interested parents. The "mainstreaming" concept could be brought up and ways that parents can facilitate the movement could be discussed. The strength of this approach is that those who are truly interested would be involved. The obvious weakness is that none may participate, or those who should be there will not come.

There should be a series of meetings offered to the parents of mentally retarded children. Some of the content will be factual such as information on income tax, social security benefits, wills, how to help write individualized education programs and projects that parents can do at home to facilitate learning. Some of the content, on the other hand, will be affective, dealing with feelings associated with having a retarded child, the effects on the community and on siblings, and how to deal with nonverbal or derogatory communication of other parents.

It is usually best to have a set number of sessions, with options for additional meetings. If parents know that there will be three or four meetings held

two weeks apart with definite content and objectives, they will usually be more apt to participate than if they find themselves in a never ending series of meetings with vague goals. This is true, of course, with almost all parent education programs.

What Is Giftedness?

Parents and teachers are interested in gifted individuals and the plans that schools have for these children.

Malone (1975) suggested a list of topics that might be contained in parent education classes. They include the nature of giftedness, the needs of 130–140 IQ children compared with higher order of gifted, the gifted underachiever, self concept, social relationships, family, after school hours, guidance, communication, leadership, and creativity and conformity. There are many interesting discussions that can be generated about the types of programs that should be available for gifted students. For instance, the public in general has accepted the notion that gifted athletes should have extra sessions after school with special instructors, wear special uniforms, travel to other schools, and have special assemblies and awards, or the individuals who have dramatic ability will have special coaches, wear costumes, put on plays, and get special recognition for their performances. On the other hand, there is concern about providing gifted students with facilities such as special classes and instructors. This is a common topic among educators as well as among parents.

There is also a growing concern about the identification of gifted students in minority groups, particularly where language is a factor. Parent groups may be able to assist in the solution to this problem.

If a workshop format is used as part of the series on parent education of the gifted, parents may develop or make materials and games to be used at home. They may also devise lists of field trips for parents to take their children on or locate special programs in the community to enrich the lives of gifted children and their families.

Another concern sometimes expressed is how to provide for the siblings of a gifted child. What should they do when a younger child overtakes an older child in reading or mathematics? It is well to recognize that parents of gifted children need information and opportunities to explore feelings just as those parents with children of other exceptionalities.

Other Parent Education Programs Associated with Exceptionalities

Parent education programs can be designed to be implemented by classroom teachers. In many cases, this is the desirable practice in that parents can work together. A problem arises, however, in some school districts where this activity has not been a part of teacher contract negotiations. One solution is to pay teachers extra for providing a specified number of parent education meetings in the same manner that teachers who work in athletics, dramatics,

and music may be paid extra. Another solution may be to hire a number of people whose major responsibility is parent education.

The individual school system will have to assess its clientele in order to determine what other types of programs on exceptionalities will need to be offered. Many children with physical handicaps, visual handicaps, hearing handicaps, and behavior problems are being integrated into the mainstream of education. Keeping parents abreast of the needs of children and the education provisions available or needed is good public relations and relieves anxieties.

While not all of the programs listed above may be provided in any one year or by any one school, they are examples that can help schools get involved with parents and parents with the educational process. Well informed parents are an asset at the building level and to the community and the nation.

Parent Advisory Groups

During recent years there has been a slow but steady growth in the formation and use of parent advisory groups. Part of the impetus for the growth was the requirement for such groups in order to participate in federally funded projects such as Head Start and other early childhood special education programs. In addition, some educators have become aware of the lack of parent support for bond issues and innovations in school programs. In fact, in some communities there has been an appearance of open adversity between the school and the community. As school systems have become larger and more complex, they have appeared to draw away from the neighborhood center concept and a feeling of community involvement. School administrators have formed parent advisory committees in order to combat this drift.

Purpose

There have been many mixed feelings about advisory groups by those who have been members of the group and those who have been instrumental in forming the groups. Comments range from "detrimental" and "worthless" to "essential." While it is difficult to ferret out why there is such a disparity of attitudes toward such groups, there probably is a high correlation between the clarity of purpose or goals for the group and the membership's satisfaction with the group. If, for instance, individuals agree to be members of an advisory group with the idea that they will be providing important input into major decisions of the project and find that they are expected to sanctify and broadcast decisions that have been made by the administration, a feeling of frustration results. Conversely, if an individual agrees to participate in a group with the idea that he or she will act as a sounding board and finds that major decisions are being asked of the group with only limited access to the information needed to make the decisions, hostility may arise. Bridge (1976) stressed the importance of clear objectives for parent participation and Greenwood, Breivogel, and Jester (1977) spoke of the need to develop a sense of direction and purpose early in the group formation. For some of the

federally funded programs, the objectives are spelled out and include such things as decisions on budgets, personnel, and curriculum. Other programs merely suggest that an advisory committee should be formed. The objectives of the group will dictate, at least to a degree, who might be asked to serve or how participants will be selected.

Advisory groups can serve several purposes:

1. *Expertise.* It may be that there are parents within the organization that have special skills in communication or public relations. If the purpose of the advisory group is to enhance a feeling of staff or community unity, these individuals may be able to provide special assistance. If there is a need to consider reorganization of the building or the construction of a playground or a recreation room, someone with architectural knowledge or design may be helpful.
2. *Broadcasting.* If the purpose of the group is to explain school programs to the public, it would be important to select representatives who have a diverse sphere of influence.
3. *Community input.* The purpose of an advisory group may be to collect information that the administration either does not have privilege to or is unable to collect because of lack of staff. These members may not only have roots in the community, but may also possess some knowledge of interviewing techniques or questionnaire development skills.

It is usually desirable to write out what the purpose and objectives of the parent advisory group are to be. There should also be some information on the extent of the decision making process by the group. There are some decisions that the project director or principal cannot delegate and must be in a position to abrogate. Parents have a right to know how far they can go.

Selection of Membership

The membership of an advisory committee will, of course, be in part determined by the purpose of the group. Greenwood, Breivogel, and Jester (1977), in discussing the school advisory committees in Florida, pointed out that parents should outnumber all other members. They suggested that a typical group might have as many as 25 voting members including parents, students, teachers, and noninstructional staff. While the school administrator would not be a member, he or she would have veto power. Greenwood and his colleagues indicated that ways to select parent membership include a mail ballot or elections at PTA meetings. In order to get low income or minority membership participation, it may be necessary to have alternative procedures to insure representation.

If the purpose of the parent advisory group is clearly defined, project personnel may arbitrarily define the composition of the group and choose members to fit the roles. This strategy often occurs in the formulation of a task force that is asked to deal with a specific problem, and it usually is an effective way to accomplish spelled out objectives.

Procedures

In addition to a written statement of the purpose of the group and the composition of the membership, it is important to provide the group with some structure. There should be a chairperson and someone should be chosen to take minutes at meetings. Minutes reduce the possibility of misunderstanding and poor followthrough. If one of the members brings a list of parent concerns to the meeting and wants some decision by either the group or program administrator, it helps to have them addressed in writing. The minutes of the meeting give an indication of accomplishment or progress. Whoever is taking minutes may want to check out with the group at the end of the meeting to be sure that what is being recorded is what they want said. This is particularly helpful if the group does not meet often or does not have sustained contact between meetings.

One of the first activities is to set a time and a place and establish the frequency of meetings. It may be that in the initial stages the group will feel a need to meet relatively frequently to get a feeling of unity and to carve out areas of work. There should also be some indication as to how long one is expected to serve as a member of the group. Busy people are often more inclined to serve if it does not look like the job will be forever.

Activities

Parents are often very interested in curriculum (Bridge, 1976). A parent advisory group can be helpful in obtaining inputs from the other parents by constructing questionnaires and conducting telephone interviews to obtain information that will be helpful in decision making. Procedures for developing individualized education programs require that parents have input into the objectives for their individual children. However, it is possible that parents as a group can provide direction for long range program change. For instance, at the secondary level, parents may feel it is important to have a driver education class developed for exceptional children. This might include physically handicapped children as well as most of the other exceptionalities. As an advisory group, the parents could help define the problems and help make decisions about what parts of the existing curriculum should be replaced by the new program.

At the elementary level and middle school level, parents often become concerned with the need for some type of sex education program for the handicapped. By meeting with the educational staff this program could be developed.

Curriculum concerns of teachers as well as parents could be brought before the parent advisory group. The use of hand calculators for students at the secondary level who are still having trouble with math concepts is often discussed. Parents could become a part of the decision. Educators often keep problems to themselves that could be shared with parents.

Greenwood and his colleagues (1977) suggested a number of activities that the advisory group could get involved in, such as conducting surveys, doing a

needs assessment, interviewing teachers and students, designing attitude questionnaires, touring facilities, and analyzing and aggregating the data collected. This information gathering and synthesizing activity of a parent advisory group can provide inputs for decision making. Those involved will also gain a greater understanding of the total program.

If the school or project is contemplating a parent volunteer program, the parent advisory group may try to determine where in the program volunteers could best be used and what types of activities they would be expected to carry out. With this information, they could begin a solicitation program for volunteers, explaining the jobs and the times needed. They could also join with the project director and staff in developing an inservice training program for the volunteers.

With declining populations and the possibility of empty classrooms, the parent advisory group may decide to recommend the conversion of one or two of the rooms into a "drop-in center" (Pettiford, Hasenfeld, & Raney, 1976). Depending upon the community structure, this could be a place where parents could come to share ideas, read about child rearing, make things, and share patterns and recipes. The parent advisory group could help design the space, equip or stock the room, and help provide some staffing. There could be a provision for babysitting, a clothing exchange, a children's book exchange, or toy exchange.

Parent advisory groups will probably be most successful when the purposes are clear, the procedures are well defined, and there is an opportunity for action. It is a good idea to have teacher as well as student representation in the group and it is also probably advisable for the project director or principal to keep a low profile but still be available.

Parent Volunteer Programs

Among the competencies seldom addressed in teacher training programs is one concerned with organizing, supervising, and managing ancillary personnel in the classroom. As a result, some teachers ask not to have student teachers in their classes; would prefer not to have aides; shy away from speech therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, and counselors; and do not want parent volunteers in their rooms. On the other hand, some teachers become so adept at using the many resources available that the casual observer cannot pick out the teacher from the other helpers in the classroom.

Following are some of the many reasons to consider implementing a parent volunteer program:

1. It can reduce the pupil-teacher ratio for certain activities. A parent can listen to a small group read while the teacher is introducing new concepts to another group.
2. It can bring another level of expertise to the classroom. Some parents have traveled extensively and other parents have unique skills (e.g., in

mechanics, computers, science, poetry, art, music, dance) that the teacher can capitalize on and that may not be in the teacher's own repertory.

3. It can provide another set of hands for many noninstructional activities. In most classrooms there are noninstructional tasks that need to be done such as taking attendance, counting lunch room attendance and milk money, setting up tape recorders, supervising the playground and the lunch room, and duplicating material. Parents can be a tremendous help in these activities.
4. It can provide assistance with routine instructional activities that can be easily learned by parents. Parents can give spelling words, learn to run programs such as Monterey Reading and Math, and correct papers from a key either provided by the teacher or accompanying the instructional material.
5. It can provide assistance for extracurricular activities. Many field trips and other outings would not be possible without extra help. Some clubs such as photography, chess, homemaking, or mechanics might be run more effectively with parental hep. For a long time parents have shown their teaching ability in helping with merit badges in scouting and 4-H activities.
6. It can help parents become more involved and appreciative of the school's work with their children. Having parents actively involved in the school program is good public relations. They are able to communicate to other parents the many fine things that are going on in schools today. By being in the neighborhood, they can also bring some of the other parents questions and concerns to the school.

Organization

Usually the principal or program director takes the leadership in developing a parent volunteer program. However, if an active parent advisory group has been formed, this can be an excellent opportunity for interaction.

Probably the best place to start is with a survey and a followup discussion of the results with the teachers. If the program or school has not had volunteers previously and therefore the teachers have not had experience with other adults in the class, there may be a great deal of apprehension. It may be best to start out with volunteers for activities that do not require teachers and parents to work cooperatively until the teachers are ready. These might include such things as help on the playground and in the lunch room. It might also involve having a parent or two available to duplicate materials for the teachers. In addition, parents may be used during the first half hour to hour of the day to perform such tasks as collecting lunch money and taking attendance.

If a questionnaire is to be used with the teachers, it is probably best to give a number of suggestions that can be checked rather than completely open ended. It might also include a place to indicate the frequency and time of day. A sample questionnaire is shown on page 56.

Parent Volunteer Questionnaire

Teachers Name _____ Grade/Subject ____ Room No. ____

DIRECTIONS: Our school is considering developing or expanding a parent volunteer program. We need to know what type of help you would like and how often. For instance, if you want someone to give spelling words on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, check that entry and indicate MWF and the approximate hour. In this way we can determine how many volunteers we need, how often, and how long we will need them. Feel free to add to the list.

A. Noninstructional When

____ 1. Duplicate materials
____ 2. Help supervise lunchroom
____ 3. Help supervise playground
____ 4. Take attendance
____ 5. Collect lunch money
____ 6. Help with juice and cookie break
____ 7. Help with coats and hats (winter)
____ 8. Other (specify) _____

B. Instructional

____ 1. Grade papers
____ 2. Listen to reading groups
____ 3. Give spelling words
____ 4. Show flash cards (math, spelling words)
____ 5. Run Monterey or Distar programs
____ 6. Help with music
____ 7. Help with art activities
____ 8. Help with special interest areas
____ 9. Other (specify) _____

C. Extracurricular

____ 1. Help organize and supervise fieldtrips
Assist with:
____ 2. Career clubs
____ 3. Math club
____ 4. Science club
____ 5. Special presentation to class
____ 6. Great Books club
____ 7. Other (specify) _____

After tabulating the questionnaire, one will have a good idea of the number and type of helpers desired by the teachers. Next comes the job of recruiting parents. A good place to start the recruitment of parents is from a known group of interested parents identified by the teachers and other school staff. This group has the advantage of being a known quantity and has already shown some interest. Sending a bulletin home may enlist a few parents but usually there is little response unless the program is well known to the parents. Telephone calls help. Sometimes parents can be recruited during conference meeting time or at PTA functions. Another source is the senior citizen

group. There are often exteachers and other leadership people who would be interested in donating some time. Secondary school students are enthusiastic and creative. Some high schools give students credit for volunteer work and tutoring with younger children. Members of service organizations or sororities or fraternities in the community can sometimes be tapped for volunteer time.

Orientation

Many volunteer prgrams falter and fail because of a lack of preservice training for both the volunteers and the school personnel. Parents become dissatisfied because they are not told what to do and teachers become dissatisfied because parents do not take any initiative. Friction results when parents interfere with the discipline of a child or get insistent in instructional activities by showing the children "my way to do it." Following are some points that can profitably be covered in orientation sessions with parents.

1. *Attendance.* There should be a specified limit on how many absences with prior notice will be allowed. A teacher may be planning to work with two or three children while the volunteer gives the spelling words. If the parent cannot be depended upon, it makes organization of individualized programs difficult.
2. *Confidentiality.* Students have a right to privacy. Volunteers should not abuse this right any more than teachers. Most parent volunteers accept this and respect the rights of others, but anyone in the school setting should have this reaffirmed from time to time. Teachers, of course, should provide good models for volunteers and not engage in idle lounge talk about students and their families.
3. *Interference.* Volunteers should be encouraged to observe and question teachers about practices and programs before intervening. The teacher may have a well planned program of consistent reinforcement and planned ignoring with a student that could be delayed by inappropriate interventions. Some children have learned to be good manipulators of adults and sometimes get well meaning volunteers to do their work for them when they *can* and *should* do it themselves.
4. *Policy.* Volunteers should have a good idea of what the school's philosophy, policies, and procedures are. This helps the whole staff be consistent.

There should be followup meetings with volunteers for discussion purposes. Problem areas can be explored and tensions can be alleviated. Teachers should also be encouraged to discuss the volunteer program and to suggest ways it can be improved.

Evaluation

As with any other part of the educational program, the volunteer program should be evaluated periodically. One type of evaluation will be the

satisfaction indicated by parents (volunteers) and school personnel. To a certain extent this can be measured by seeing how many of the volunteers drop out of the program and for what reason. Another indication would be if teachers who did not request volunteer help begin to ask for some and if teachers who requested some help the first year either asked for the same or more the next year.

Informal evaluation can be obtained in discussions, faculty meetings, or volunteer meetings. However, one may wish to extend evaluation to the students to see what their feelings are about having extra adults in the class. Of course, the most important factor would be to see if children gain academically, socially, emotionally, and physically from the additional help.

Volunteers can be an excellent resource for the school program. Many schools have made use of this resource for the benefit of youngsters. Volunteers deserve to be recognized for their service to the educational program at school assemblies and special dinners, and with certificates and merit pins. Some parents continue to work in schools long after their children have moved on up the educational ladder. They become strong supporters of and extensions of our educational programs.

Appendix A

Parent Involvement Assessment Scale (PIAS)

Listed below are a number of strategies, techniques, or methods that parents and teachers can use to become intimately involved in the education of handicapped and gifted children. Check the column at the left when the component exists and rate from one to five the effectiveness or efficiency of its operation (one being lowest and five highest). Some descriptions or suggested activities for each item are included to assist in the rating.

Provisions are made for rankings from three groups: principal, parents, and teachers. The form might be particularly appropriate for parents to complete when they come for a conference. When all have completed the ratings, the building principal should rank each item from his or her perspective. Ask all teachers to respond to the PIAS. Aggregate the data from each group and record it on a master sheet. Check to see where discrepancies exist.

Consideration for Ranking Each Item

Placement. A high rating would indicate that almost all parents come to the school and feel free to bring a friend if they wish. They enter into the discussion and actually talk a moderate share of the time. On occasion they express to others (outside the school and it is filtered back) about how well they felt they were treated and how appropriate they felt the placement was. Parents do not hesitate to suggest changes in placement and are involved in minor change decisions as well as major changes.

Program Planning. A high rating would indicate much more than having parents sign an individualized education program form. At the onset of a planning conference, parents are asked what goals or objectives they would

recommend for the child to be written into the individualized education program. They share with teachers various techniques, that is, types of reinforcers, that seem to motivate the child. They carry out and report to the school activities to do at home to complement the school program. They feel free to suggest changes in their child's program.

Parent Advisory Group. A high rating would indicate more than a group of parents that meets two or three times a year to ask questions or receive information from the school administrators. The parent advisory group would have clearly delineated guidelines based on school board policy and state laws, and the group membership would be representative of all disability areas and age groups served. Meetings would be held regularly and be attended by at least 3/4 of the membership. The parent advisory group would carry out activities that would be *proactive* rather than just *reactive*. They might be involved in developing questionnaires, conducting surveys, organizing other parents, and providing input to school personnel on attitudes and opinions of parents in the area. They would keep minutes of the meetings to be available to share with others.

Parent Programs. A high rating would indicate that there were various parent education programs available to the patrons of the school. Parents might be involved in conducting as well as participating in the programs. The programs would be conducted at different times of the day and throughout the school year. They would be of such a scope that all parents would attend at least one of the programs.

Parent Volunteers. Parents can be a valuable resource as volunteers to a school in both instructional and noninstructional activities. Parents have been prepared to conduct programs such as the Monterey, Distar, and Frostig programs for children and to serve as teacher aides. They have been used for speaking to classes on special interests and they have been used for on the job training for older students. Parents can grade papers, duplicate materials, and aggregate classroom performance data. They can conduct fund raising activities and work on school benefit projects. A high rating would indicate that parents are actively involved in school activities both instructional and noninstructional and that there is an ongoing preservice and insevice training program for volunteers.

Progress Reporting. A high rating would indicate that most parents attend pupil progress reporting conferences that are regularly scheduled. Released time for teachers would be available for such contacts and provisions would be made for weekly or daily reporting for selected cases as needed. Inservice training would be available for the staff and for the parents on techniques for sharing information. Inservice training for staff includes techniques for conducting conferences and reporting to parents.

Home Visitation Program. A number of school districts have found home visitation programs an effective strategy for establishing a bond between school and home. A planned program would receive a high rating. If home visitations are only reserved for severe problem cases, this would result in a lower rating. A high rating would also indicate inservice training for staff on techniques for conducting home visits.

Parent-Teacher Association. A high rating would be given to the situation where the formal PTA has succeeded in involving parents and teachers in active interchanges. These meetings might involve small group discussions on school problems and issues, such as discipline, progress reporting, and sex education. They might also include large group programs such as open house or all school programs planned for community education.

Open Communication Index. A high rating would indicate that there is a free flow of communication between school and home, and home and school. School personnel are probably involved in a planned "call a parent a week" program to report positive results. Personal notes, letters, telephone calls, and

	Existence	Effectiveness		
		1–5 Principal Rating	1–5 Parent Rating	1–5 Teacher Rating
Placement				
Program Planning				
Parent Advisory Group				
Parent Programs				
Parent Volunteers — Instructional activities				
Parent Volunteers — Noninstructional activities				
Progress Reporting (Evaluation)				
Home Visitation Program				
Parent-Teacher Association				
Open Communication Index				
Parent Comfort Index				

school news is passed to parents often. Parents feel comfortable calling or visiting the school at all times; teachers feel free to call parents to report both positive and negative information.

Parent Comfort Index. A high rating would indicate that parents feel comfortable in visiting the school. On any given day, parents could be found in the lounge having a cup of coffee, visiting with the principal, secretary, counselor, librarian, or teachers. While this category is somewhat subjective, the consistent presence of parents on the school grounds is usually a good objective measure that parents are at ease being there.

Appendix B

Organizations and Agencies Concerned with Exceptional Persons

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf
3417 Volta Place, NW
Washington DC 20007

American Association on Mental Deficiency
5201 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20015

American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities
1346 Connecticut Avenue, NW, #817
Washington DC 20036

American Council of the Blind
1211 Connecticut Avenue, NW, #506
Washington DC 20036

American Foundation for the Blind
15 W. 16th Street
New York NY 10011

American Speech and Hearing Association
9030 Old Georgetown Road
Washington DC

Association for Children with Learning Disabilities
5225 Grace Street
Pittsburgh PA 15236

Closer Look
National Information Center for the Handicapped
PO Box 1492
Washington DC 20013

The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston VA 22091

Epilepsy Foundation of America
1828 L Street, NW
Washington DC 20036

Gifted Child Society
59 Glen Gray Road
Oakland NJ 07436

International Association of Parents of the Deaf
814 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring MD 20910

Muscular Dystrophy Association, Inc.
810 7th Avenue, 27th Floor
New York, NY 10019

National Association for Autistic Children
169 Tampa Avenue
Albany NY 12208

National Association for Mental Health
1800 North Kent Street
Rosslyn VA 22209

National Association for Retarded Citizens
PO Box 6109
2709 Avenue E East
Arlington TX 76011

National Association of Parents of the Deaf-Blind
525 Opus Avenue
Capitol Heights MD 20027

National Association of the Physically Handicapped
6423 Grandville Avenue
Detroit MI 48228

National Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and Adults
2023 West Ogden Avenue
Chicago IL 60623

National Federation of the Blind
524 4th Street
Des Moines IA 50309

National Foundation
March of Dimes
Division of Health Information and School Relations
1275 Mamaroneck Avenue
White Plains NY 10605

United Cerebral Palsy Association
66 East 34th Street
New York NY 10016

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Mullins, J., and Wolfe, S. *Special people behind the eight-ball.* Johnstown PA: Mafax Associates, 1975. (This bibliography is a compilation of children's books, autobiographies, biographies, books by parents, and fiction. Brief annotations are included for some. The books are arranged by categories; probable reading and interest levels are indicated for nonadult works.)

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center in Mental Retardation. *Parenting handicapped children: Earliest experiences.* Eugene OR: Author, N.D. (A slide/sound presentation, 22 minutes in length, that can be used for parent discussion groups. The kit includes a user's manual. While the focus is on young children, the content is of value to all parents of handicapped children.)